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## THESIS

**AN ORGANIZATIONAL ANALYSIS OF THE UNITED  
STATES AIR FORCE PERSONNEL CENTER (AFPC)  
AIRMAN ASSIGNMENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (AMS)**

by

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March 2001

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**AN ORGANIZATIONAL ANALYSIS OF THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE  
PERSONNEL CENTER (AFPC) AIRMAN ASSIGNMENT MANAGEMENT  
SYSTEMS (AMS)**

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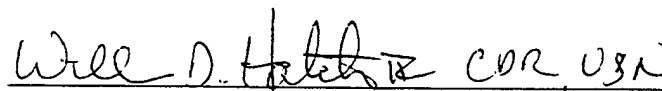
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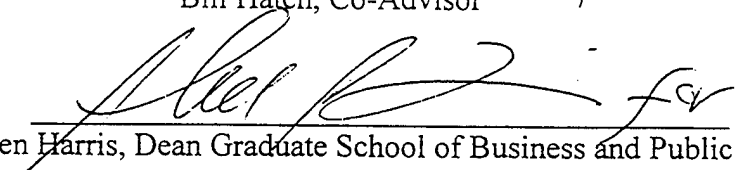
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## **ABSTRACT**

. An analysis of the U. S. Air Force, Assignment Management System (AMS) is presented as an effective model that could be adapted by other services and agencies as a viable system for job matching, assignment and management of personnel assets. The military must compete with the civilian market to staff and man an all-volunteer force. There is a critical need to place more emphasis on career development and quality of life issues created by duty assignments requiring frequent and extended family separations due to overseas assignments.

Conventional personnel management practices leveraged by technological advances in secure data base management and Internet communications provide an opportunity for the military to more effectively and efficiently assign personnel. The Air Force system was chosen as a mature and well-developed model for a more detailed outcomes assessment and evaluation as presented in this study.

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS

AF/DP	Air Force Deputy of Personnel
AFCMOA	Air Force Colonel Matters Office of Assignments
AFGOMO	Air Force General Officer Matters Office
AFI	Air Force Instruction
AFPC	Air Force Personnel Center
AFSC	Air Force Specialty Code
APPG	Annual Planning and Programming Guidance
ASAF	Assistant Secretary of the Air Force
BCA	Base Career Advisors
BMT	Basic Military Training
BOP	Base of Preference
CAA	Career Assistance Advisors
CEM	Chief Enlisted Manager
CMSgt	Chief Master Sergeant
CONUS	Continental United States
COT	Consecutive Overseas Tour
CSS	Command Support Staff
DCPDS	Defense Civilian Personnel Data System
DCS	Deputy Chief of Staff
DEROS	Date Eligible to Return from Overseas
DOB	Date of Birth



DoD	Department of Defense
DOR	Date of Rank
DPAA	Department of Personnel for Airman Assignments
DPAC	Department Procedures Assignment for Chiefs
DPAAS	Department of Personnel Airman Assignments Support (Airman Management Branch)
DPAPP	Department of Personnel Assignments, Programs and Procedures
DRI	Defense Reform Initiative
DRU	Direct Reporting Unit
EQUAL	Enlisted Quarterly Assignment Listing
FAR	Federal Acquisition Regulation
FO	Follow On
FOA	Field Operating Agency
HB	Home Basing
HQ USAF	Headquarters United States Air Force
HQ USAF/JAX	Headquarters United States Air Force/ Judge Advocate General
IT	Information Technology
MAJCOM	Major Command
MILMOD	Military Modernization
MPF	Military Personnel Flight
MTI	Military Instructor
NCO	Non-Commissioned Officer
OOC	Out of Cycle

OPR	Office of Primary Responsibility
PCS	Permanent Change of Station
PDS	Personnel Data System
PERSTEMPO	Personnel Tempo
PME	Professional Military Training
PPC	Personnel Processing Code
RI	Reporting Identifier
RNLTD	Return No Later Than Date
SAF/MI	Secretary of the Air Force/Manpower and Installations
SDA	Special Duty Assignment
SDI	Special Duty Indicator
SEI	Special Experience Identifier
SMSGt	Senior Master Sergeant
SPECAT	Special Category
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats
TAFMSD	Total Active Federal Military Service Date
TDY	Temporary Duty
TOS	Time on Station
TTG	Technical Training Group
UAF	Unit Authorization File

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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

### **A. OVERVIEW**

The current paradigm for personnel assignment in the military in effect reassigns the military population globally every 2 to 4 years. Choices for the service member being transferred, and across services for the losing and gaining units, are often limited or non-existent. In the civilian sector, job seekers have choices and employers have the discretion to pick the right person for the right job at the right time with the right skills required to do the job. This idea of job-employee matching is more limited in the military. However, there are ongoing efforts in the United States Air Force to leverage conventional personnel distribution management procedures with new technology that will facilitate job assignment and provide more choice for the individual airman.

This thesis analyzes the USAF Personnel Center Assignment Management System (AMS), which employs the information system referred to as Enlisted Quarterly Assignment Listing (EQUAL) and EQUAL Plus. This system promotes personnel re-engineering within the Air Force and could be adapted to meet the needs of other military services. The main focus is on the assignment of personnel to and from overseas assignments. EQUAL Plus is actually the system that handles Conus to Conus requirements for the Air Force, which are considered Out-of-Cycle (OOC).

The magnitude of the Air Force's personnel assignment process is significant. There are approximately 351,063 service members on active duty in the Air Force, 281,756 of which are enlisted. The average age of the Air Force enlisted population is 29, while the average age of the officers is 35. Active duty personnel supported 516,293

family members in 1999. In any given year, 13 percent of the total work force is assigned overseas duty. (Ref 1) Given these demographics, it is easy to see that the Air Force, just one branch of the military, has a myriad of obstacles to overcome when assigning personnel. The Air Force, and the other services, must also contend with personnel inventory shortfalls in the personnel system while balancing the mandate to carry out missions in foreign nations and states. This thesis will explore the use of a computer based assignment system as a job-matching tool.

## **B. METHODOLOGY**

In conducting research for this thesis, relevant organizational and management literature is reviewed to provide background on how the components of policy in a government organization can intervene or interfere with the system. Next, the Air Force manpower and personnel process is described to give a context of the Air Force Personnel Center and its role in the process. This is done by looking at the process as a system where outcomes and successes can be forecasted using a stakeholders audit (people, groups, or institutions with interests in a project or program), and Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis. SWOT analysis is the principle method for the basis of conclusions and recommendations. The conclusions drawn are based on interviews and analysis of frequently asked questions from airmen using the current assignment system as well as personnel management re-engineering initiatives currently mandated in the Air Force Department of Personnel (AF/DP).

## **C. BENEFIT OF THE STUDY**

Operational feasibility of allowing service men and women choices in where they are assigned is a monumental undertaking. Using the Air Force as an example of a hierarchical, government organization that has developed a viable job-matching system

can help other military services with the similar characteristics and requirements. The similarities in assignment issues across the services may be more relevant than currently recognized. Continuing to allow a hierarchical distribution system to make lifestyle choices for an all volunteer force could be detrimental in retaining the personnel assets needed to operate globally.

#### **D. ORGANIZATION OF THIS THESIS**

For manageability, this thesis is limited to the active duty Air Force enlisted assignments division. Chapter II examines the mission, vision and command functions of the USAF Personnel Center in order to explain some of the theories and processes in subsequent chapters. Chapter II also provides information on organizational analysis methods for strategic planning. Chapter III looks at the organization of the manpower and personnel process as it relates to the United States Air Force. Chapter IV is a detailed discussion of the Airman Assignments as they relate to the Assignment Management System (AMS) and provides background on Enlisted Quarterly Assignment Listing (EQUAL) and EQUAL Plus. Chapter V describes of the Air Force Personnel Center and analyzes the impact of Air Force "best practices" specifically, the impact EQUAL and EQUAL Plus has had on the Airmen Assignments Division of AFPC. Chapter VI describes the current benefits derived from the AFPC, where technology has spawned personnel management re-engineering. This chapter uses a stakeholder analysis to suggest the importance of manpower and personnel initiatives in the Air Force. Chapter VII is a summary about the Air Force personnel assignment process. This chapter uses a SWOT analysis and offers recommendations for further research for other military services.



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## **II. OVERVIEW OF SYSTEMS THEORY FOR ANALYSIS OF THE AIR FORCE MANPOWER AND PERSONNEL PROCESS**

This chapter provides a contextual abstract of the Air Force Manpower and Personnel process by describing the functions, missions, and command structure of the Air Force Personnel Center. This chapter will introduce the concept of stakeholder audits and Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunity, and Threats (SWOT) analysis in change management to be used to analyze the Air Force's manpower and personnel process in subsequent chapters.

### **A. HISTORY OF THE AIR FORCE MILITARY PERSONNEL CENTER**

The Air Force Military Personnel Center (AFPC) began operating in July 1963, and became a separate operating agency in 1971. The Air Force integrated the manpower and personnel functions into the U. S. Air Force Headquarters in 1978, and changed the official name of the Personnel Center to the Air Force Manpower and Personnel Center.

In October 1985, the manpower function was realigned and separated from personnel; its name was changed back to the Air Force Personnel Center (AFPC) in 1986. This change allowed the center to become a field-operating agency, while remaining at headquarters command (Ref 2). The Personnel Center is the directorate for both military and civilian employees. The Secretary of the Air force combined all personnel operations, civilian and military, into the AFPC in October 1995.

### **B. MISSION, VISION, AND COMMAND FUNCTIONS**

The Air Force Personnel Center (AFPC), at Randolph Air Force Base, Texas, implements personnel programs affecting nearly 400,000 active-duty members and 185,000 civilian personnel through a worldwide network of military and civilian re-

locations. In addition to active duty and civilian personnel, the center manages more than 109,000 Air National Guardsmen and 78,000 Air Force Reservists. Its mission is:

to provide quality service in worldwide personnel operations with integrity, responsiveness and sensitivity to commanders, Air Force civilian and military members, families, retirees and other customers (Ref 3).

The primary means of accomplishing this mission is to ensure the right number of people in the right grades and skills are available to perform the unit commanders' worldwide assigned missions. All this must be accomplished while closely aligning the task with well being of the service members and their families. An important factor in this orchestration is the individual's career development. AFPC Commander, Major General Richard Brown describes the center's vision as one that is, "Responsive to the mission... Sensitive to the people... Respected by the customer." (Ref 4).

### **C. SWOT ANALYSIS**

Organizations have certain histories, mandates, and policies driving the organization to an intended set of outcomes or consequences. Before any outcomes can be assessed, a thorough assessment of the internal and external environment must be taken to ascertain the feasibility of the desired goals. A SWOT analysis is useful in predicting the organization's future. It is also a good indicator of the organization's present situation. The SWOT analysis, along with an ongoing stakeholders audit, can provide a snapshot of the organization's current success and future outcomes.

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis can be simply understood as examining an organization's internal strengths and weaknesses, and its external opportunities and threats. It is a general tool designed in the preliminary stages of decision-making and as a precursor to strategic planning in various applications

(Ref 5). Table 2.1 outlines some of the factors pertaining to the internal strengths and weaknesses and external opportunities and threats in an organization's environment.

<b>Internal Environment</b>		<b>External Environment</b>	
<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>	<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>Threats</b>
A distinctive competence?	No clear strategic direction?	Services broader customer base?	Take over by other competitors?
Adequate Resources?	Lack of managerial depth and talent?	Enter new technology markets?	Slow market growth?
Special Expertise?	Missing key competencies?	Diversify into related services?	Competitive Pressures?
Cost Advantage?	Weak market image?	Complacency among rival firms?	Vulnerability to stakeholder's expectations?
Good communication with the client/ customer?	Unable to finance changes in process?	Fast market growth?	Growing bargaining power of the customer?
Innovative Programs or services?	Plagued with internal operating problems?	Expand service line to meet a greater range of customers needs?	Change tastes and needs of the customer?

Table 2.1. SWOT Analysis Factors.

### 1. Internal Survey of Strengths and Weaknesses

Managers, in general, seek to maintain efficiency in their processes without paying any heed to their institution's strengths and weaknesses. If, indeed, such internal audits are carried out, areas requiring change reveal themselves. Furthermore, the potential and possibilities for new services and programs may emerge.

Making a list of internal weaknesses could reveal areas that can be changed to improve the organization, and things that are beyond control. Examples of inherent weaknesses are quite numerous; some examples are as follows: low staff and personnel morale; sub-standard infrastructure support; outdated technology or legacy systems; scarce instructional resources and even the demographics within the community (Ref 6).

Weaknesses seldom occur in isolation; strengths are present and need to be ascertained as well. Examples of potential strengths include: (a) a reasonable amount of expertise within the organization; (b) strong and dedicated leadership/champion; (c) ability to use the services on a broader spectrum; (d) a strong reputation for the training required to get entry-level employees; and (e) diversity among the professional staff (Ref 7).

Implementing changes in a system is difficult at best and requires reviewing the processes that can enable productivity while meeting the organization's needs. In the military, recruiting and retention is a particularly important emerging issue, because the armed services have a mission to embrace members from all sectors of society. Demographic projections have predicted a two- to four-fold accelerated growth of Hispanic and Afro-American population relative to the white majority; this will be reflected in the number of job seekers and their preferences in the jobs they seek (Ref 8).

Surveys, focus groups, interviews with current and past employees, and other knowledgeable sources facilitate assessing strengths and weaknesses. Once weaknesses and strengths are delineated, it would be appropriate to reconfirm these items. It should be recognized that the perceptions might depend on the representative group consulted.

## **2. External Survey of Threats and Opportunities**

An external look at the opportunities and threats is complementary to the internal self-study in a SWOT analysis. National influences as well local concerns are of paramount importance when deciding what new programs to add or which existing programs to modify or remove (Ref 9).

Information about the current command climate, demographic changes, and job turnover rates should be considered in this phase of the study. The multitude of trade/industry sources include, but are not limited to, current leadership, local media, journals, conferences, technology leaders, and business contracts. Each of these is a potential source of highly valuable information.

Threats, in various forms, need to be ascertained. Increasingly, restrictive budgets are the rule rather than an exception. An anticipated cut in state or federal funding can have a significant impact on implementing a high-budget program. In recruiting, for example, each branch of the military should conduct ongoing planning to attract more recruits to their programs. In addition, changing attitudes of high school graduates in a particular region may pose a considerable threat by way of reduced interest in a military lifestyle. An awareness of demographic changes in the local population can reveal opportunities to address new issues and pave the way for a more meaningful process to access and retain enlisted service members. There could be a pattern of preferences among the various minority or cultural groups.

It should be recognized that opportunities and threats are not absolute. What might at first seem to be an opportunity may not emerge as such when considered against the resources of the organization or the expectations of society. The greatest challenge in the SWOT method could probably be to make a correct judgment that would benefit both the institution and the community.

## **D. STAKEHOLDERS AUDIT**

### **1. What is a Stakeholders Audit?**

Another important method for guiding an organization to positive outcomes is by getting key players involved in the process. A stakeholders audit is a useful tool for leaders to examine the environment and potential pitfalls. A stakeholders audit identifies key stakeholders involved in an organization or a project. Stakeholders are persons, groups, or institutions with direct interests in the project or program, or acting as process intermediaries (Ref 10). This definition of stakeholders includes both winners and losers, and those involved or excluded from the decision making process.

### **2. Why do a Stakeholders Audit?**

Stakeholders audits allow managers and administrators to assess the environment and devise negotiating positions in project discussions. To draw out consequences in any system, relationships must be established between the system and the stakeholders. Most specifically, a stakeholders audit can:

- Draw out the interests of stakeholders in relation to the problems which the project is seeking to address or the purpose of the project
- Identify conflicts of interests between stakeholders, which will influence assessment of a project's risk before funds are committed
- Expose relations between stakeholders that can be built upon, and may enable "coalitions" of project sponsorship, ownership, and cooperation
- Help assess the appropriate type of participation by different stakeholders, at successive stages of the project cycle

### **3. When Should it be Done?**

Stakeholders audits should be conducted before changing a project or process, and may be informal. Lists of stakeholders and their interest can be compiled and risk conflicts addressed. The most important thing to remember is that the process is

continually changing and audits should be conducted at every point throughout the system and later in evaluating the outcomes.

#### **4. Who Should Do the Audit?**

The audit should be undertaken as a team approach. One individual or agency cannot fully grasp the special interest of all those involved in the project. It is imperative for the team to be sensitive to the privacy of the interests for each group that arise from the audit. There are many hidden agendas and covert interests that will gain few benefits if uncovered in a public arena.

#### **5. How is a Stakeholder Audit Conducted?**

Stakeholder audits can be conducted in various forms. An example of a stakeholders table is shown to explain how various areas of interest can be found among all the stakeholders (See Table 2.2). Stakeholders can be listed and categorized as primary, secondary, and external interests. Primary stakeholders are the groups or people ultimately affected by the project or change in process. Secondary stakeholders can be described as intermediaries in the process of delivering goods or services to the primary stakeholders. External stakeholders are people or agencies that may have some indirect impact on the change process or influence over other groups of stakeholders. This thesis will address only the primary stakeholders.

### **E. CHAPTER SUMMARY**

The need for effective assessment in a changing environment is crucial. To determine where an organization is going in the future, organizations must review the internal and external environment using stakeholders as a part of the assessment. It is important for a learning organization to use these tools for analysis prior to a crisis.



The next chapter summarizes the Air Force manpower and personnel process. It gives a foundation for how the process is incorporated into the changes that have occurred at the Air Force Personnel Center (AFPC).

Secondary Stakeholders	Interest
Local Agencies Staff Contractors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Performance Metrics</li> <li>• Additional Responsibilities</li> <li>• Budget Control</li> <li>• Public Image</li> <li>• Liability</li> </ul>
Primary Stakeholders	
Employees Minority Groups Other Organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Freedom of choice</li> <li>• Loss of Status</li> <li>• Fairness</li> <li>• Reduced/Increased Responsibility</li> </ul>
External Stakeholders	
Taxpayers Competing Agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Costs</li> <li>• Reliability</li> <li>• Available Information</li> <li>• Necessity</li> </ul>

Table 2.2. Example of Stakeholder Table for Proposed Project in a Public Organization

Source: Adapted from Bryson, J., *Strategic Planning for Public and Nonprofit Organizations*, Jossey Bass:San Francisco, 1995

### **III. OVERVIEW OF THE AIR FORCE MANPOWER AND PERSONNEL PROCESS**

This chapter examines the Air Force manpower and personnel process. This chapter provides an overview of the organization and the processes for requirements determination within manpower and personnel assignment is given. In later chapters, Stakeholder Audit and SWOT analysis will be introduced to analyze the Assignment Management System (AMS) of the Air Force Personnel Center (AFPC) for enlisted assignments.

#### **A. STRUCTURE AND AUTHORITY FOR MANPOWER REQUIREMENTS DETERMINATION**

Manpower is a critical resource. Manpower requirements are identified and authorizations, or spaces, are the resources approved to man Air Force peacetime and wartime missions (Ref 11). To support national security objectives, Air Force units must successfully accomplish assigned missions using the minimum possible levels of manpower to effectively and efficiently execute those missions. Unit Commanders, are presumably provided with manpower in quantity, grade, and specialty required to adequately accomplish the unit's mission.

Manpower is a large part of the annual Air Force budget approved by the Congress. Congress controls manpower by authorizing end strengths and establishing military grade distributions and other guidelines. This makes manpower a scarce resource for which all federal agencies compete. The Air Force competes for the manpower necessary to accomplish assigned missions and allocates available manpower consistent with mission requirements. The Air Force establishes policies and procedures to define

credible manpower requirements; develops defensible budgets, allocates manpower resources to commands, and ensures efficient use. These actions help the Air Force to successfully compete for the manpower resources needed to achieve the greatest possible mission capability and necessary levels of support with available manpower.

The Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Manpower, Reserve Affairs, Installations and Environment (SAF/MI) is responsible for manpower policy matters as a component of the Headquarters of the Air Force (Figure 3.1). SAF/MI approval is required before any manpower policy documents can be changed, reissued, or rescinded. The Director of Programs and Evaluation (HQ USAF/PE) is responsible for developing, coordinating, and executing manpower policies and procedural guidance. Air Staff functional managers provide guidance to accomplish unit missions consistent with available manpower. Major Commands (MAJCOM) and field commands accomplish missions consistent with Air Force functional guidance and available manpower (Ref 12).

## **B. COMPLIANCE WITH MANPOWER POLICY**

HQ USAF budgets for manpower requirements. The Congress provides manpower end strengths to the Air Force, and HQ USAF then allocates appropriate end strengths to the MAJCOMs, Field Operating Agencies (FOA), and Direct Reporting Units (DRU). Due to fiscal constraints, these end strengths may not match total manpower requirements. MAJCOMs, FOAs, and DRUs restate these end strengths in a Unit Authorization File (UAF) as detailed line items called authorizations. These metrics

# HEADQUARTERS DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE

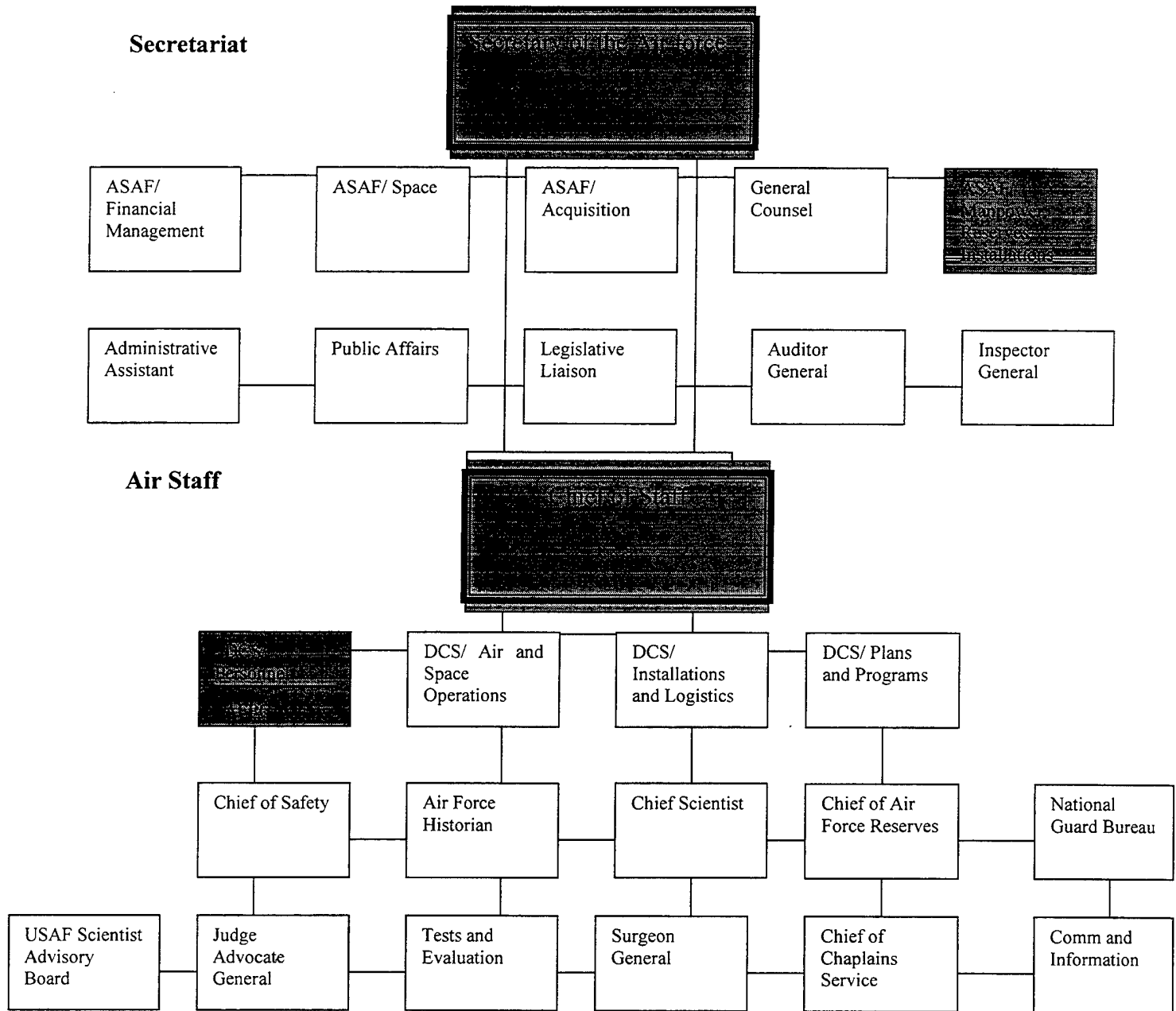


Figure 3.1 Headquarters USAF Organization Chart.  
Source: AFVA 38-104, 15 June 2000, OPR: HQ 11 WG/XPM.

are used to measure the variance, over time, among Air Force budgeted end strengths, manpower requirements, and funded authorizations for officers, enlisted and civilian personnel. The desired outcome: reduce the gap among the three measured areas.

### **C. MANPOWER MIX DECISION PROCESS**

The following steps describe the decision process used to determine the type of manpower to use when validating manpower requirements (military, civilian, or contract service). See Figure 3.2 for a graphic illustration. A validated manpower requirement is a unit of work, usually expressed in whole work-years, that a MAJCOM recognizes as a requirement for mission accomplishment.

After validating a manpower requirement, the MAJCOM must decide if the requirement must be filled by military incumbency for a unit's mission. The standards require military incumbency for duty that is directed for military personnel by law or duty that involves special military training or the potential for direct combat. The MAJCOM must then decide if the work must be performed during wartime as well as peacetime. If the answer is no, a workload requirement is identified and forwarded to HQ USAF Executive Office for Personnel so that a proper Air Reserve Force authorization can be given. Otherwise, Air Force Instructions AFIs 36-2105 and 36-2108 are referenced to determine whether proper Air Force Specialty Codes exist to perform the workload.

If the proper military skills are available, the MAJCOM gives active military authorization. If the skills are not available, the MAJCOM or installation contracting office must determine whether the workload is legally contractable according to Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) part 37, paragraph 37.104, which prescribes personal services contracts. If the skills are contractable, the MAJCOM or installation contracting

office determines if contract services are available. If the skills cannot be contracted, then the MAJCOM or local civilian personnel office determines whether civilian skills are available. If civilian skills are not available, then the matter must be forwarded to HQ USAF for resolution.

#### **D. ASSIGNMENT AUTHORITY**

The Department of Defense (DoD) allocates funds, delegates authority and directs policies for Temporary Duty (TDY) assignment and permanent change of duty station (PCS) assignment of Air Force (AF) military personnel. PCS may also be directed to ensure equitable treatment of members, such as PCS from overseas to the Continental United States (CONUS), after completing prescribed OS tour. This authority extends to assignments for operational (including rotational), training (including formal education and professional military education) and force structure assignments.

The Air Force Office of Primary Responsibility (OPR) for assignments designates assignment authorities and OPRs to which authority is delegated for assignments and related actions prescribed in AFI 38-201 for manpower and organization. The Air Force uses a centralized assignment system: to ensure compliance with laws, personnel management directives and instructions, functional area directives and instructions; to ensure assignments and related actions are cost effective, fair and equitable; and to maintain personnel accountability. PCS assignment authority cannot be further delegated.

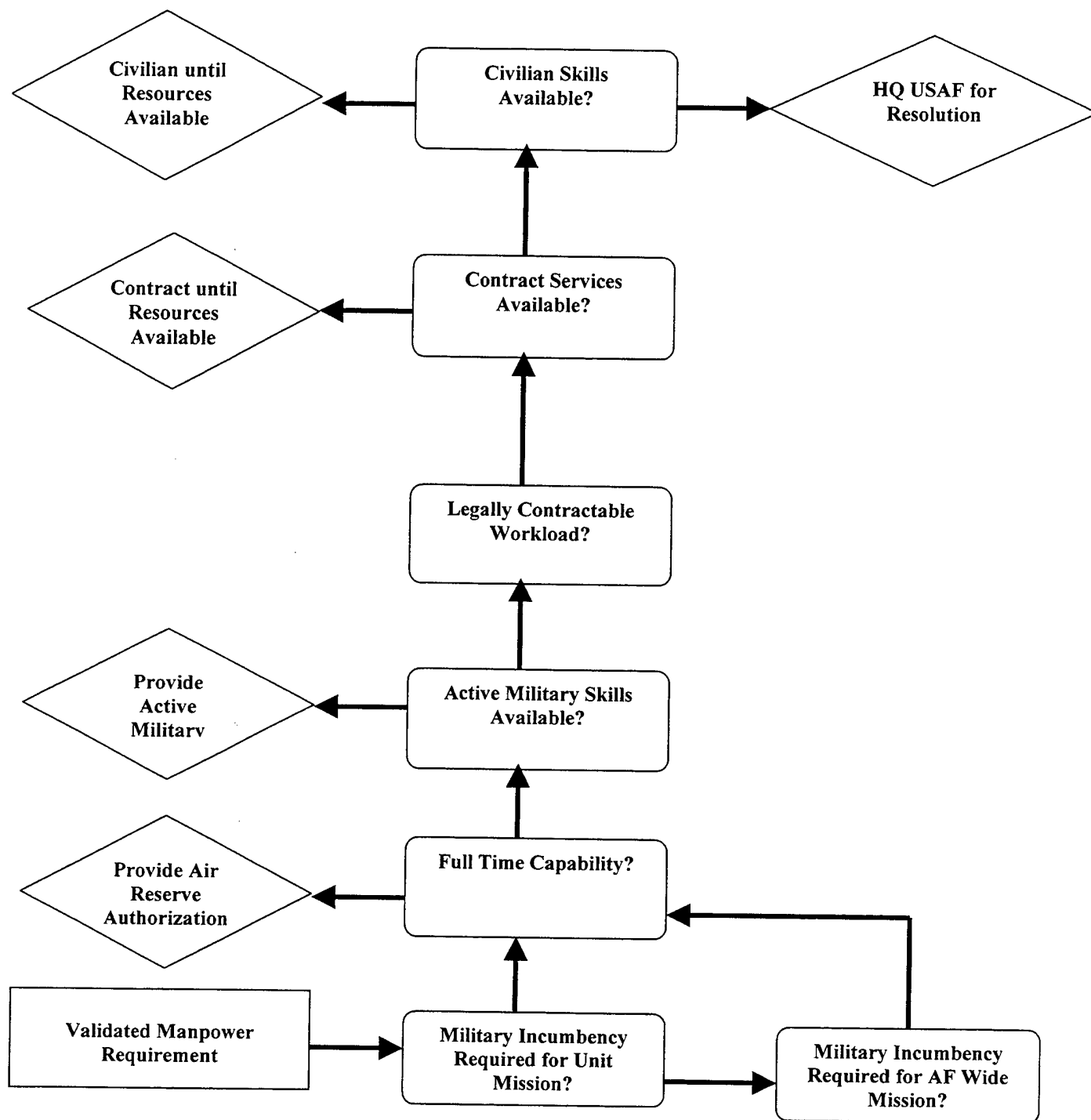


Figure 3.2. Manpower Mix Decision Process.  
Source: AFI38-204 1 August 1999, Chapter 6

The Air Force must assign military personnel in a way that satisfies operational, rotational, and training requirements. Air Force assignment only refers to active duty members of the force. All Air Force Guard and Reserve personnel are brought on active duty to fill specific, pre-determined manpower authorizations. Personnel distribution occurs through two phases: Manpower and Personnel. All distribution is given priority based on Congressional law, DoD and AF directives and instructions.

The Secretary of the Air Force distributes end strength as equitably as possible to the MAJCOM (or equivalent). End strength allocation is based on the manning priority plan and manning unit groupings as submitted by the MAJCOM (or equivalent) to the Airmen Management Branch, AFPC/DPAAS, for enlisted assignment authorizations. The AFPC is the Field Operating Agency (FOA) responsible for all enlisted personnel distribution. Once all assignment approvals are met, HQ AFPC is responsible for distributing assignments through its assignment divisions, located at AFPC.

When a need arises that requires deviating from the original end strength provisions, a formal waiver process allows for manning changes. Unit commanders must submit a request to the Military Personnel Flight (MPF) addressing the impact manning might have on their local mission. MPF must forward the request to the Assignment Office of Primary Responsibility (OPR), which is the total force designated assignment authority. The assignment OPR may approve or disapprove a request, or forward the request to a higher approval authority.

#### **1. Distribution of Personnel**

Personnel are distributed to meet the overall needs of the AF as follows:

- According to law, DoD and AF directives and instructions



- As equitably as possible between MAJCOMs (or equivalent) within a specialty and grade using the manning priority plan when submitted by the MAJCOM to HQ AFPC/DPASS
- According to guidance from the Air Staff functional area OPRs
- According to written Memorandum of agreement (MOA) for special circumstances

## **2. Exceptions**

Exceptions to policies, procedures, or other provisions of AFI38-201 may be considered when an action is prohibited; is not addressed; a criterion is not met and there are no waiver provisions established; or, there are waiver provisions but that criteria is not met (Ref 13). A request for an exception may be justified based upon operational necessity, or when compliance with a requirement would result in an injustice, a severe inequity, or a personal hardship significantly greater than other members encounter in similar circumstances, or when it is shown an exception serves the overall best interests of the Air Force. A request for exception may be submitted by an official responsible for a mission (that is, unit or group commander, etc.), or a member may submit a request for him or her-self. Senior level officials at their discretion may endorse exception requests from members. However, requests from members are evaluated based on the justification.

Unit commanders review requests by members and determine if the required justification exists. A unit commander, or higher-level commander, may disapprove a member's request if it is not justified and will advise the member of the reasons for disapproval. Commanders may address the impact approval may have on their local mission in their forwarding recommendation. When a commander recommends approval, he or she forwards the request to the Relocations Element of the MPF, unless the request is being processed through command channels.

MPFs assist members and commanders in ensuring the established requirements are met. MPFs advise a member, the unit commander, or other requester when a request does not appear to be justified or fails to meet some other requirement. The MPF may send a request to the MAJCOM (or equivalent), and also include the HQ AFPC assignment OPR.

Requests for exceptions to policy, procedures, or other provisions will be addressed to the office shown in Figure 3.3 for personnel as indicated. These offices, with input from the assignment OPR when necessary, may approve or disapprove a request, or make a recommendation for consideration by the appropriate approval level. When the authority to approve a request is within the office shown in Figure 3.3, the approved exception will be forwarded to the assignment OPR for appropriate action. When an exception (or a waiver in conjunction with an exception) requires approval at a higher level, then the assignment OPR prepares the request or assignment, curtailment, or other action, and submits it to the appropriate approval level and includes the exception approval, or recommendation for approval, from the appropriate office Air Force General Officer Matters Office (AFGOMO) for all general officers, including brigadier general selects, Air Force Colonel Matters Office Assignments (AFCMOA) for colonels, including colonel selects, of any competitive category, Headquarters Air Force Judge Advocate Executive (HQ USAF/JAX) or staff judge advocate officers, lieutenant colonel and below, Headquarters Air Force/ Department Programs Assignments and Procedures (HQ AFPC/DPAPP) for officers in the grade of lieutenant colonel and below, Headquarters Air Force Personnel Center/ Department Procedures Assignment Chief Master Sergeants (HQ AFPC/DPAC) for airmen in the grade of Chief Master Sergeant,

and HQ AFPC/DPAPP for airmen in the grade of Senior Master Sergeant (SMSgt) and below.

### **3. Validation**

Qualified people with the needed skills must be in the right job at the right time to meet the Air Force mission. At the same time, the Air Force has a responsibility to keep attuned to the demands placed on its members resulting from personnel tempo (PERSTEMPO). Consequently, the Air Force classifies and assigns people worldwide as equitably as possible to ensure a high state of readiness. The Air Force also recognizes a need for special assignment considerations to take care of Air Force people with exceptional needs.

The Air Force uses a coherent and logical classification system to identify valid manpower requirements. Each Air Force occupational specialty is identified and described, to ensure minimum prerequisite standards are set for each specialty, only qualified individuals are placed into each specialty.

While the primary consideration in selecting personnel for reassignment, either permanently (PCS) or temporarily (TDY), is the member's qualifications to accomplish the mission, there are additional important factors to be considered. To the maximum extent possible, the Air Force assigns individuals on a voluntary basis and in the most equitable manner feasible. The Air Force equitably distributes involuntary assignments among similarly qualified personnel, factoring PERSTEMPO where practical to minimize family separation and to avoid creating a severe personal hardship on the member.

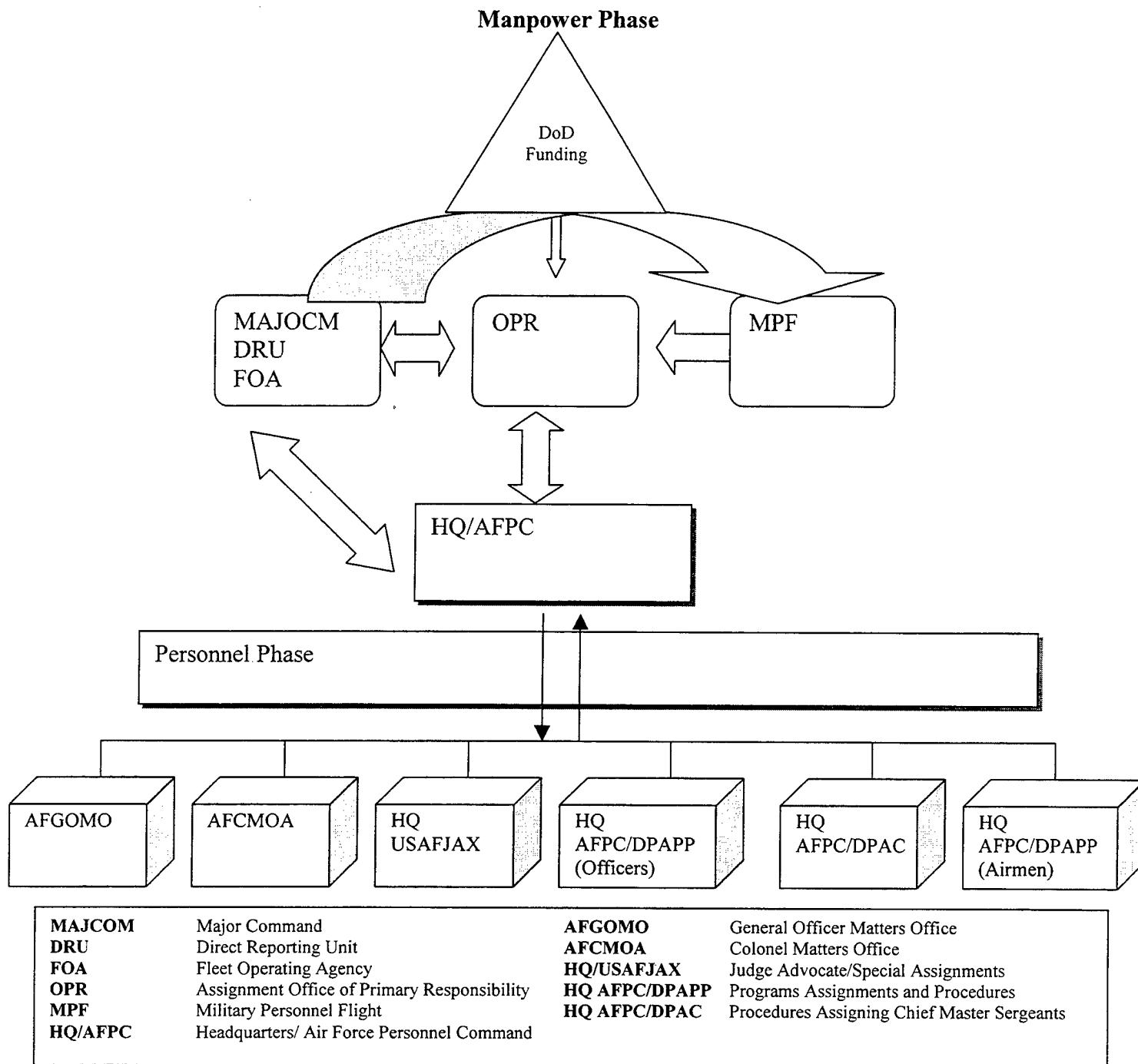


Figure 3.3. USAF Assignment Manpower and Personnel Process based on AFI38-204.

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#### **IV. OVERVIEW OF THE AIR FORCE ENLISTED ASSIGNMENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (AMS)**

This chapter introduces the system used by the Air Force to manage the assignment process for enlisted airmen. The Assignment Management System (AMS) is designed to place controls and give authority to a specific Office of Primary Responsibility (OPR). The main focus of this chapter is with the Department of Personnel Airmen Assignments (DPAA).

This chapter gives a brief overview is given to explain how airmen are selected for assignments. The EQUAL and EQUAL Plus technology is introduced to detail the methods available to airmen in the selection process. Finally, specific programs are highlighted to give some understanding to the special needs of the Air Force when managing airmen assignments, especially the overseas rotations.

##### **A. ASSIGNMENT DISTRIBUTION AND CONTROL**

The Assignment Management System (AMS) was developed to distribute personnel equitably among commands. Major command personnel staffs and the AFPC assignments branch jointly distribute Non-commissioned Officers (NCOs) to specific units. Distribution is accomplished using computer programs in conjunction with the policies contained in Air Force Instruction (AFI) 36-2110 (assignments). While the computer plays an important role in the process, AFPC assignment personnel manually review every assignment to ensure accuracy and equity.

Initial overseas and overseas return assignments are completed in three-month cycles. The cycle begins by providing allocations without names, or "faces," to the

MAJCOMs based on their entitlements. Entitlements are determined by Air Force-wide manpower requirements. The MAJCOM reviews the allocations to ensure distribution is consistent with Air Force priorities and determines the specific base of assignment. Allocations are advertised through numerous channels (i.e, EQUAL lists, AF times, World-wide web). An airman can also volunteer and update preferences through the Military Personnel Flight (MPF) or the Commander's Support Staff (CSS) (See Figure 4.1).

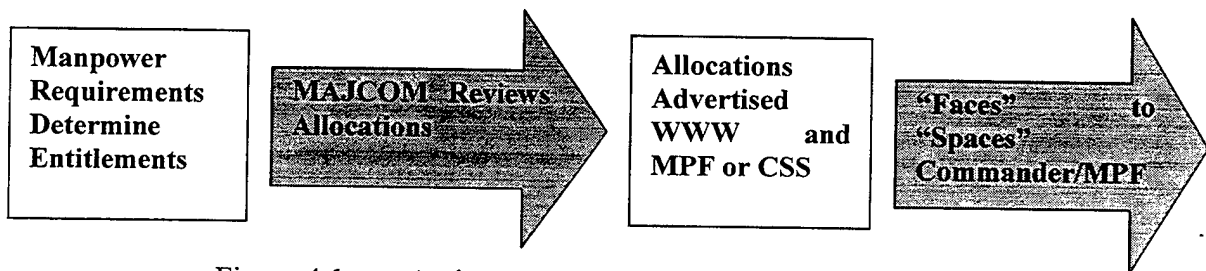


Figure 4.1 Assignment Flow adapted from AF36-2110.

There are windows of opportunity in which volunteer assignment can be accomplished. Based on choices and relative priority among those in the same grade and Air Force Service Code (AFSC), names are matched to bases to provide the "faces" for the authorizations or "spaces." The actual assignments then flow to the MPFs and the airman's commander for official notification.

Graduates from Basic Military Training (BMT) are provided assignments on a weekly basis, as are most graduates from Technical Training (TTGs). Assignments are provided to the CONUS as well as overseas and are provided equitably among the commands. Individual preferences are considered to the fullest extent possible.

There are numerous special programs designed to support an individual's needs. Some of these are: Voluntary Stabilized Base Assignment Program (VSBAP), Voluntary

Enlisted CONUS Assignment Program (VECAP), Base of Preference (BOP), permissive assignments, joint spouse, etc.

The Air Force AMS is unique and its primary focus is on the needs of the Air Force first, then on the assignment equity, and finally, on individual preference considerations. When all three come together a match can be made distributing the right person with the right skills to the right job at the right time.

## **B. ASSIGNMENT MANAGEMENT PROCEDURES**

Designated assignment authorities and Offices of Primary Responsibility (OPR) to which authority is delegated, are responsible for ensuring assignments comply with laws and directives and meet fair and equitable standards. This is done in a centralized system as shown in Table 4.1.

There are a number of policies and procedures, which apply to assignment actions and programs in guidance provided by the designated assignment authority or assignment OPR. It is important to understand that assignments are influenced by all of these requirements collectively, and that is why the system remains centralized. When necessary for national interests or the best interests of the AF, waivers, exceptions and/or deviations from the policies and procedures may be authorized by the proper authority when transferring an airman through Permanent Change of Station (PCS) orders.

## **C. SELECTING AN AIRMAN FOR ASSIGNMENT**

The primary factor in selecting a service member for PCS is the member's qualifications to fill a valid manpower requirement and perform productively in the billet. PCS eligibility factors, such as time on station (TOS), although important, are secondary. When members with the required qualifications are identified, then PCS eligibility



<b>Section A. Designated Assignment Authority</b>
Office and Area of Responsibility
AFGMOM, AIR FORCE GENERAL OFFICER MATTERS OFFICE
General officers, including selectees
HQ USAF/JA, THE JUDGE ADVOCATE GENERAL (TJAG)
Judge Advocates
AFCMO, AIR FORCE COLONEL MATTERS OFFICE
Colonel, including selectees except judge advocates
AIR FORCE PERSONNEL CENTER (HQ AFPC/CC)
Lieutenant colonels and below (medical and chaplains) and all airmen.
<b>Section B. Office of Primary Responsibility (OPR) for Assignment Actions</b>
Office and area of Responsibility
AFGOMO, AF GENERAL OFFICER MATTERS OFFICE
General Officers, including selectees
AF/JAX, PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT DIVISION
Judge advocates, lieutenant colonels and below.
AFCMOA, COLONELS' ASSIGNMENTS
Colonels, including selectees except judge advocates
HQ AFPC/DPA, DIRECTORATE OF ASSIGNMENTS
Lieutenant colonels and below (medical and chaplains) and all airmen.
DPAA, AIRMAN ASSIGNMENTS DIVISION
SMSgt and below, except enlisted aircrews.
DPADD, Airman Distribution Branch
DPAAD1
DPAAD2
DPAAD3
DPAAD4
DPAAS, Airman Management Branch for force structure actions
DPAC, CHIEFS' GROUP
CMSgts, including selectees

Table 4.1. Designated Assignment Authority and Office of Primary Responsibility (OPR) for Assignment Actions.

Source: AFI36-2110 Personnel Assignments, February 1, 2000

criteria and other factors are considered. Volunteer status, individual preferences, humanitarian or special circumstances may be considered to the extent these factors are consistent with operational manning requirements. PCS is not authorized based solely on the fact a member can be used or prefers assignment elsewhere.

### 1. Special Experience Identifier

Special Experience Identifier (SEI). AFI 36-2101, Classifying Military Personnel (Officers and Airmen) implements policy and prescribes procedures for SEI establishment and management. The SEI complements the assignment process and is

used in conjunction with the grade, AFSC (or Chief Enlisted Manager (CEM) code), AFSC prefixes and suffixes, Special Duty Identifier (SDI), Reporting Identifiers (RI), Personnel Processing Codes (PPC), and professional specialty course codes.

The SEI system may be used when experience or training is critical to the job/person assignment match, and no other means is appropriate or available. SEIs can be used when it is essential to rapidly identify personnel to meet unique circumstances, contingency requirements, or other critical needs.

Manpower positions are coded with an appropriate SEI to identify positions that require, or provide unique experience/qualification. This allows assignment OPRs to approve requests in advance that match assignments and airmen using the SEI by subordinating other important assignment considerations. After selections have been made, the assignment OPR will review them to ensure the impact in relation to other factors is justified.

## **2. Assignments by Enlisted Quarterly Assignments Listing (Equal) and Equal-Plus**

The EQUAL specifies those enlisted requirements (assignments) HQ AFPC intends to make to and from OS (through SMSgt). It displays what is available by AFSC, grade, and location, and allows airmen the opportunity to align preferences to actual AF needs. Airmen can review the EQUAL at the MPF, CSS, or on the HQ AFPC World Wide Web page: ([http://www.HQ\\_AFPC.af.mil](http://www.HQ_AFPC.af.mil)). Assignments to and from OS are completed in three-month cycles as shown in Table 4.2.

<b>Primary Reporting Months Allocations Advertising Match Cycle</b>	
Oct/Nov/Dec	Jan Feb Mar
Jan/Feb/Mar	Apr May Jun
Apr/May/Jun	Jul Aug Sep
Jul/Aug/Sep	Oct Nov Dec
<b>DEROS Months Allocations Advertising Match Cycle</b>	
Aug/Sep/Oct	Mar Apr May
Nov/Dec/Jan	June Jul Aug
Feb/Mar/Apr	Sep Oct Nov
May/Jun/Jul	Dec Jan Feb

Table 4.2. OS Cycle Schedule (For Volunteers in the CONUS and OS).

There is one CONUS requirement identified for each overseas returnee. These requirements are then advertised on the returnee EQUAL, overseas returnees prioritize the appropriate advertised requirements, and, finally, the requirements are matched to the returning airmen (the highest number indicates the highest priority). To ensure equitable and fair assignment processing for members returning from an overseas assignment, a set of rules determine which airmen have priority for a particular assignment. See Table 4.3 for a list of criteria.

Within each priority group, members are further given priority if they are currently serving a short tour and voluntarily extended their tour for a period of 6 months or more, or if members currently serving a long tour voluntarily extended their tour for a period of 12 months or more beyond their original DEROS. Additionally, each month voluntarily extended beyond the minimum 6 or 12 month period raises the member's priority within their priority group. In the event of a tie within a priority group, individuals will be matched in the following order: (1) Grade (highest grade takes precedence); (2) Date of Rank (DOR) (earliest date takes precedence; (3) Total Active Federal Military Service Date (TAFMSD) (earliest date takes precedence; (4) Date of

Birth (DOB)(earliest date takes precedence); (5) Reverse Social Security Number (SSN)  
order (uses all 9 digits and lowest number takes precedence) (Ref 14).

	A	B	C
<b>RULE:</b>	If a member is serving at an OS location and is:	...and is credited with the number of short tours shown (excluding current tour)	...then the returnee match priority is:
<b>1</b>	Unaccompanied and the tour length is 17 months or less and dependents are restricted or limited	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 8 or more</li> <li>• 7</li> <li>• 6</li> <li>• 5</li> <li>• 4</li> <li>• 3</li> <li>• 2</li> <li>• 1</li> <li>• 0</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1</li> <li>• 2</li> <li>• 3</li> <li>• 4</li> <li>• 5</li> <li>• 6</li> <li>• 7</li> <li>• 8</li> <li>• 9</li> </ul>
<b>2</b>	Unaccompanied and the tour length is 17 months or less and dependents are not restricted or limited	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 8 or more</li> <li>• 7</li> <li>• 6</li> <li>• 5</li> <li>• 4</li> <li>• 3</li> <li>• 2</li> <li>• 1</li> <li>• 0</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 10</li> <li>• 11</li> <li>• 12</li> <li>• 13</li> <li>• 14</li> <li>• 15</li> <li>• 16</li> <li>• 17</li> <li>• 18</li> </ul>
<b>3</b>	Unaccompanied and the tour length is 18 months or more or unaccompanied regardless	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 8 or more</li> <li>• 7</li> <li>• 6</li> <li>• 5</li> <li>• 4</li> <li>• 3</li> <li>• 2</li> <li>• 1</li> <li>• 0</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 19</li> <li>• 20</li> <li>• 21</li> <li>• 23</li> <li>• 34</li> <li>• 25</li> <li>• 26</li> <li>• 27</li> </ul>

Table 4.3. Enlisted Assignment Priority for Members Completing OS Tours.  
Source: AFI38-2110, February 2000

### **3. Special Duty Assignments (SDAs)**

The EQUAL-Plus system was activated for certain Air Force requirements which cannot be satisfied by normal allocation and assignment selection criteria. These duties require airmen with unique qualifications (Ref 15). The requirement for unique qualifications, especially when combined with other non-standard considerations, may warrant special manning procedures. Designation as an SDA, in itself, does not necessarily give the person manning priority within an activity or affect the responsibility of the assignment OPR to distribute and manage personnel resources to best serve the Air Force's overall needs. While activities designated as SDAs may have some similarities in manning procedures, each special manning procedure is individually justified and approved as essential. In other words, designation as an SDA does not automatically initiate a standard set of special manning procedures.

### **4. Home-Basing (HB) and Follow-On (FO) Assignment Program**

These programs allow airmen selected for a short tour, dependent restricted or electing to serve the unaccompanied tour length (less than 18 months), to apply for advanced assignment consideration prior to departing for that short tour. Home-Basing (HB) assignments permit return to Alaska, Hawaii, or the same CONUS base airmen left before going on the short tour. The Follow-On (FO) assignment program provides for advanced consideration of a CONUS assignment (not HB) or an overseas tour for the member's PCS after completing the short tour. If a particular AFSC is not authorized at a certain base, it should not be listed. HB/FO requests can only be approved when a requirement exists in a particular grade and AFSC at the time the member will be

available (essentially, at Date Eligible to Return from Overseas (DEROS) month + 60 days) (Ref 16).

After an airman applies for a HB or FO assignment, the Personnel Data System (PDS) stores the application at AFPC until the fourth month prior to the applicant's projected departure date. At this time, AFPC attempts to provide the applicant a HB or FO assignment.

After the request is reviewed for the HB or FO assignment, the MPF has approval authority and notifies the airman. If HB or FO requests are approved, the airman can plan accordingly. If it is disapproved, the "next" assignment is handled under the EQUAL overseas returnee process (except for military spouse co-locations).

### **C. CHAPTER SUMMARY**

The Assignment Management System in the Air Force is unique in its ability to distribute and control overseas rotations and do so equitably among the overseas commands where manning is critical. The Air Force transfers half of its enlisted force to and from overseas assignments every year while maintaining certain CONUS programs such as BOP, SDAs, training commands, and recruiting. EQUAL was designed to assist in this distribution process by affording the airman choice in overseas assignments. EQUAL Plus grew out of the need to handle special assignments mentioned. The next chapter is designed to give an overview and analysis of the Air Force Personnel Center and the role of the Airman Assignments division of the AFPC. It describes more completely how vital the EQUAL/EQUAL Plus systems are in the assignment process for active duty enlisted personnel.

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## **V. OVERVIEW OF THE AIRFORCE PERSONNEL CENTER (AFPC) AIRMAN ASSIGNMENTS AND THE ROLE OF ENLISTED QUARTERLY ASSIGNMENTS LISTING (EQUAL) AND EQUAL PLUS**

This chapter is an overview of the AFPC which provides a systems framework for how the AFPC is directly impacted by EQUAL and EQUAL Plus. There are many key components in the design of the organization that explicitly highlight the strategic approach to change the Air Force has undertaken in personnel-distribution management. Given the environment of web-based technology and a need to utilize manpower resources more efficiently, the AFPC Airman Assignments Division use EQUAL and EQUAL Plus to distribute personnel equitably among all MAJCOMs.

### **A. AIR FORCE PERSONNEL CENTER (AFPC)**

The Air Force Personnel Center, with headquarters at Randolph Air Force Base, Texas, is a field operating agency of Headquarters U.S. Deputy Chief of Staff for Air Force Personnel (HQ USAF/ DCS) and has responsibility for managing the personnel programs and policies affecting Air Force active-duty and civilian members. It was formed during a realignment of the Air Force Military Personnel Center and Air Force Civilian Personnel Management Center on Oct. 1, 1995. The Air Force Personnel Center is comprised of eight directorates, each managing several key programs.

#### **1. Directorate of Assignments**

This directorate manages the assignments for all enlisted members and officers below the grade of colonel, with the exception of members of the staff judge advocate. In addition, the directorate handles humanitarian and exceptional family member



assignments, joint duty, officer advanced academic and professional military education, and officer career broadening assignments.

## **2. Directorate of Civilian Personnel Operations**

This directorate is responsible for the plans, development and integration of all actions necessary to establish the Air Force Regionalized Civilian Personnel Office, also known as PALACE Compass. This directorate manages centralized civilian personnel processes for all Air Force installations, including: centralized external and internal staffing, data systems, official personnel folders and linked processes, certain benefits and entitlements, the standard position description library and a call-in help center.

## **3. Directorate of Personnel Data Systems**

This office provides life-cycle management for the Personnel Data Systems (PDS), and records management for the military and civilian members of the Air Force, Department of Defense civilians and more than 100 other federal agencies. Among the directorate's programs are two major modernization initiatives currently in progress- Military Modernization and the Defense Civilian Personnel Data System or DCPDS. Military Modernization will convert the current military personnel data system to a single-tier, relational database management system environment. The DCPDS modernization will provide the tools and data systems capability to support civilian personnel mission requirements at all DoD operational levels, as the personnel work force downsizes to meet National Performance Review goals.

## **4. Directorate of Civilian Career Management**

Civilian Career Management manages and operates the Air Force career management, recruitment, development and placement programs for more than 65,000 civilian employees in officer-equivalent positions worldwide. Through various programs,

the directorate is responsible for identifying, managing, training and filling civilian executive positions for 20 civilian career areas.

#### **5. Directorate of Personnel Program Management**

This directorate oversees more than 200 officer and enlisted personnel programs affecting every active-duty and retired Air Force member, such as accessions, retraining, evaluations, promotions, awards and decorations, separations, retirements, transition, retiree activities and the Air Force Disability Program.

#### **6. Directorate of Operations**

This directorate provides centralized assistance and information on total force management, including: MPF; orderly room; social actions; call center operations; and entitlement, commander and fundraising programs. The directorate also provides surveys, research and analyses, functional management for personnel and personnel systems management career fields, the Automated Records Management system, and the functional requirements of personnel data system modernization. The directorate is the center's "face to the customer."

#### **7. Directorate of Personnel Accountability**

This office is responsible for personnel policy affecting wartime and contingency operations for total force accountability, including active and reserve components as well as DOD civilians. In addition, it develops readiness systems and functions supporting wartime operations, such as mobilization and demobilization. The directorate is tasked with providing worldwide casualty reporting, notification and assistance to the next of kin. They are also the focal point for Air Force members missing, captured or imprisoned.

## 8. Directorate of Mission Support

Support is provided through this directorate to the center by managing its budget, manpower, contracting, supply and information management resources as well the center's overall physical facilities. The directorate also serves external customers by responding to White House, Congressional and inspector general inquiries. See Figure 5.1 for organizational chart.

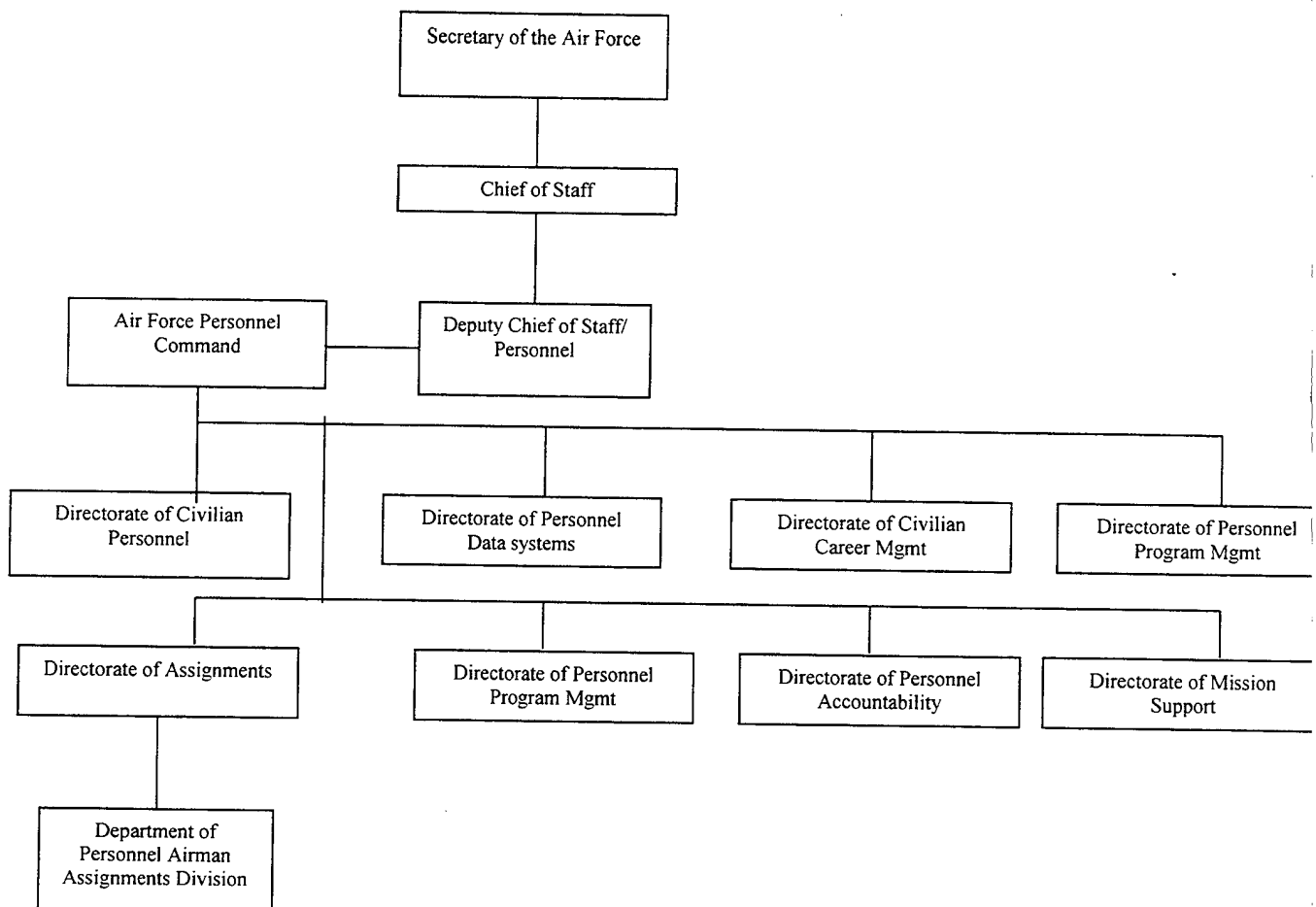


Figure 5.1. Organization for the Air Force Personnel Center.

Adapted from AFI36-2110 and AFI38-204

## **B. ORGANIZATIONAL DESIGN FACTORS LINKING THE AIR FORCE PERSONNEL CENTER WITH THE USE OF EQUAL AND EQUAL PLUS**

In order to understand how the AFPC manages airman assignments and employs EQUAL and EQUAL Plus, it is important to look at a set of organizational attributes holistically as a system. Management literature suggests using this approach to look at what makes the organization work toward innovative change. Design factors such as environment, task, organizational structure, are important indicators of the future in any change or re-engineering process (Ref 17). Stakeholders external to the system should be a part of the analysis throughout the process.

### **1. Environmental Interaction**

The environment for AFPC involves constraints and limited resources. It is extremely important to get the right people to the right job with the right skills at the right time. All the armed services must compete for manpower end strength requirements. As typical in any government organization, the bureaucracy forces budget battles that make it difficult for all agencies to get the maximum benefit out of limited funding. It is imperative for the Air Force to utilize manpower in the most efficient manner possible.

Worldwide commitments further complicate the task of assigning airmen to jobs. Only 79% of the AF jobs are CONUS, 11% are Pacific, 9% European, and 1% other regions overseas (Ref 18). As the AF continues to operate in a fiscally constrained environment, they must keep the job moves to a minimum. Many airmen leave early because of AFSCs lacking sufficient manning at certain commands. This puts a strain on budget and manpower mix decisions.

## 2. Stakeholder Interaction

The Air Force Personnel Center seeks efficiency in moving the right people at the right time. They also emphasize the effectiveness to accomplish these goals by getting the right person in the right job. The EQUAL was developed in 1996, and allows many key players to interact when matching “faces” to “spaces.” A stakeholder audit is valuable when determining what stakes matter for the organization to achieve success. Coordination is essential among the stakeholders in hierarchical organizations (see Figure 5.2). In today’s environment, technology can be the catalyst for change by using stakeholders as the tools for action.

Primary Stakeholders For Airman Assignments	Interest
MAJCOMS/FOA/DRU	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Fair Share Allocation</li><li>• Meet End Strength/Equitable Manning</li><li>• Quality of Life/Choice</li><li>• Skilled People</li><li>• Retention of the Force</li></ul>
OPR/MPF	
ASSIGNMENT NCO	
AIRMAN	
COMMANDERS	
CAREER ADVISORS	

Figure 5.2. Stakeholder map for Airman Assignment Division.

EQUAL and EQUAL Plus access is approved by the OPR then MAJCOMs may input new job announcements into the system. Assignment NCOs at DPAA HQ AFPC must approve requested advertisements and monitor the status of all jobs in the system. Although control is still maintained in a top down fashion, EQUAL makes a difference in the airman’s stakes. Since EQUAL’s inception, information has become more readily

available to both commanders and airman. A Career Assistance Advisor (CAA) billet has been established to bring together airmen and leaders so both can fully understand the importance of the decisions airmen make. EQUAL may seem like it is the tool for change, but in reality it is a tremendous communications link for all those involved to participate in the change.

In order to employ a web-based matching system in a reactive environment where needs are constantly shifting depending on priority, all the stakeholders must be actively involved. In the Air Force, Commanders are mandated to participate in the assignment process at all levels.

### **3. Command Participation**

In interviews, NCOs and other civilian personnel at AFPC, stated their manning policy is to fill 100% of priority or special duty billets, 100% of overseas long tour assignments or worldwide average of all overseas and special duty billets authorized (the current average is 92%), and fair share to remaining CONUS billets (Commands determine fair share). They espouse a two core value philosophy: man the Air Force based on mission priorities, resource distribution, and fiscal responsibility; and promote fairness to people through equity, sensitivity, and visibility (Ref 19).

### **4. Organization, Technology, Tasks, and Personnel Roles for Airmen Assignments**

#### ***a. Organization***

The Department of Personnel Airman Assignments Distribution (DPAAD) manages airman assignments. Though supported by the AFPC organization for other matters, the division is solely responsible for airman assignments. It is mostly a bottom up hierarchy with 90 enlisted NCOs responsible for assigning 70,000 airmen a year. The

DPAAD shares responsibility for enlisted assignments with the Airman Management Branch (see Figure 5.3).

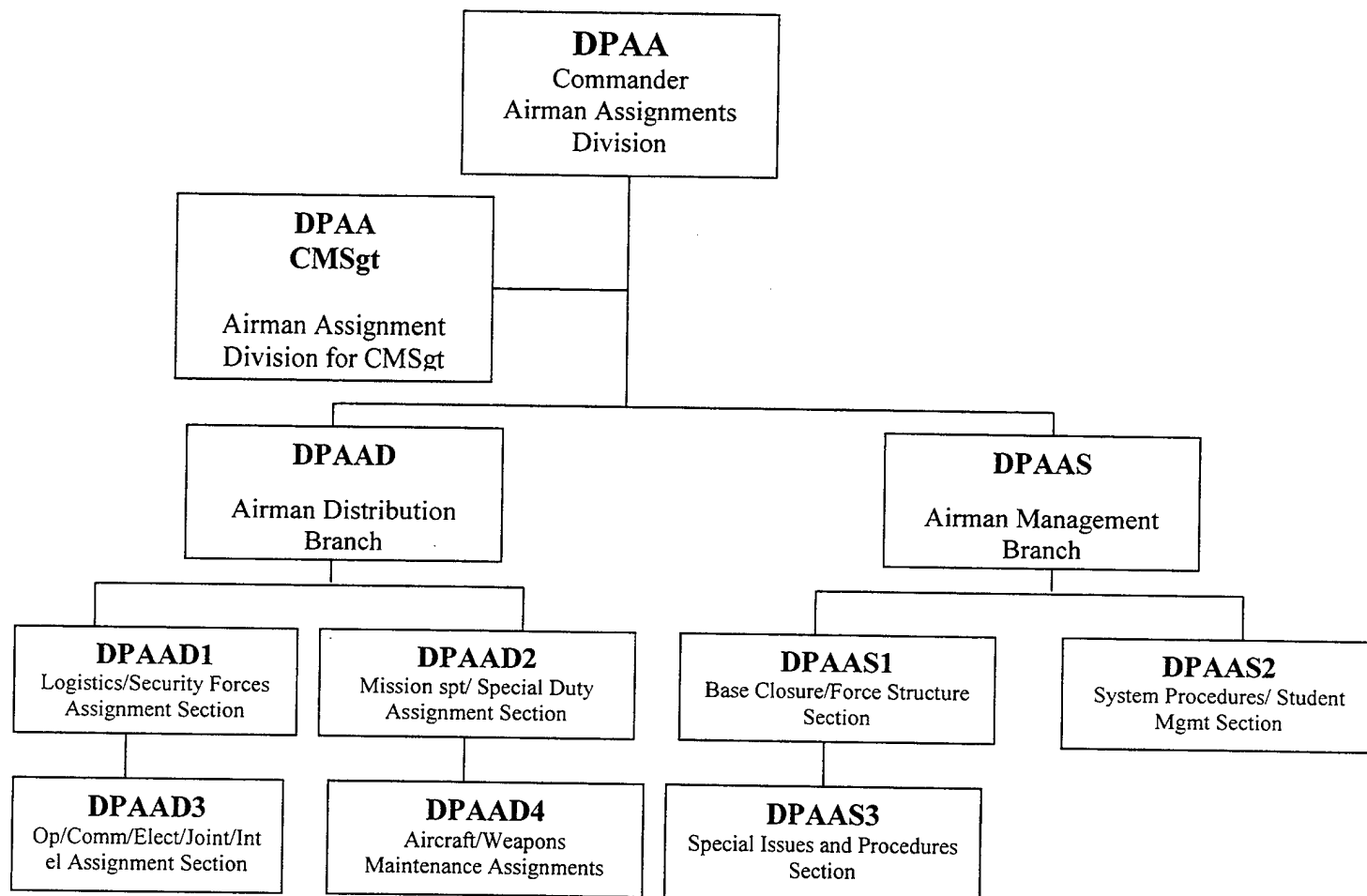


Figure 5.3. Organization Structure of Airman Assignments Branch.

**b. Technology and Tasks**

DPAAD employs the Personnel Data System (PDS) to centralize the assignment process of 70,000 airmen a year. The EQUAL and EQUAL Plus systems are used to advertise and match billets to bodies based on rotation cycles, AFSC, grade, and manning priorities within this system.

The tasks are complex requiring central coordination with all the key stakeholders. The DPAAD is responsible for overseeing every aspect of the assignment process to ensure the right numbers of people with the right grades and skills are available to perform Unit Commander's missions worldwide. The center oversees performance evaluations, promotions, separations, awards, decorations, education, and personnel procurement. It plans for contingencies, maintains active-duty personnel records, and provides transition assistance and support to Air Force retirees. It is a one-stop shop for personnel issues.

*c. Assignment NCOs*

The Airman Assignments Division of the AFPC is responsible for career assignments for approximately 286,000 enlisted airman. The personnel in charge of assignments are highly specialized and often only turnover their jobs within the division, which keeps continuity and specialized experience within the division. Assignment personnel include three officers, three civilians, and 90 enlisted personnel. The people in the division promote the idea of lateral assignment functions and the team concept.

Keeping the same people in the division helps them predict the special cases that may arise and understand operational units' changing needs. Unit Commanders are integral to the assignment process. The people in charge of assignments have a positive relationship with these commanders. Working with the same people assignment after assignment is an excellent communication link for the units and the airman assignment division.

For the most part, the NCOs in the division are hand selected and considered the best in the business. The sense of concern for the airman being assigned



is founded in the dedication of the assignment NCOs. They receive over 630,000 emails a year and take more than 450,000 calls a year from airmen concerned about their careers (Ref 20).

## **5. Information Technology Management**

Communication is of great importance to the assignment division and the force they support. Within the organization, communication is a daily event. Locating the Directorates in the same building allows for one on one communication for all personnel issues an airman might encounter. The assignment division has the luxury of assisting the airman with all aspects of career decisions (i.e., promotion opportunities, education, records maintenance). Communication with airmen involves e-mails, phone calls, and other correspondence. Several times a year, the NCOs will go to the units in the force, both CONUS and OS, and educate airman on how the assignment system and EQUAL can be beneficial to their career. The vast training over the years has been expanded to include first term airmen, by giving them more choices in their next assignment, referred to as Base of Preference (BOP).

Information systems are at the heart of what makes the assignment process work. The system is centralized and maintained by in house programmers with expert knowledge of the organization's mission and the system itself. The Directorate of Personnel Data Systems (PDS) is responsible for assuring all systems talk to one another. Personnel are trained with information systems and understand what each area of manpower and personnel is doing.

### **C. THE ROLE OF EQUAL AND EQUAL PLUS**

EQUAL is the assignment listing, which advertises most of AF enlisted assignments sending people overseas and providing CONUS assignments for overseas, returnees. Personnel in CONUS are eligible for reassignment to overseas locations when they have completed their required Time On Station (TOS). The normal TOS requirement for overseas assignment is 12 months for first-term airmen and 24 months for career airmen. In addition to TOS requirements, airmen must meet established quality control criteria for reassignment (not under Article 15 punishment, not on the Control Roster, not in Drug/Alcohol rehabilitation, no rating of 2 or lower on latest EPR, etc.). Eligibility to obtain the required retention for the assignment to which a member is volunteering may also be required. Overseas members with an indefinite Date Eligible for Return Overseas (DEROS) are eligible for a Consecutive Overseas Tour (COT) anytime after completing their original tour. Individuals with an established DEROS can also be considered for a COT, but can only volunteer for advertised requirements with a Reporting No Later Than Date (RNLTD) equal to DEROS month or the following two months (For complete rotation schedule (see Table 5.1/ Table 5.2) (Ref 21).

Assignments to and from overseas are completed in three month cycles using the selection criteria and priority provided by DPAA, and matches are made eight times a year, four cycles each going to and returning from OS (Ref 22). The CONUS to overseas cycle is the first step in the assignment process. Generally, overseas requirements (the number of positions to be filled) are determined based on the number of airmen currently OS who have a DEROS falling within a given cycle who will be returning to CONUS. Working with the overseas MAJCOMs, HQ AFPC uses this information to identify and

advertise overseas requirements on the EQUAL, allowing airmen to volunteer for assignments, and finally, selecting airmen for overseas assignments. Once the overseas assignments have been matched to airmen, HQ AFPC then works with the CONUS MAJCOMs to identify those CONUS locations where manning requirements exist.

<b>DEROS</b>	<b>OPTIONS TO MPF</b>	<b>AVAIL TO CUSTOMER</b>	<b>PREF DUE</b>	<b>MATCH</b>	<b>PDS FLOW</b>	<b>RELEASE</b>
Feb/Mar/Apr	23 Oct 00	24 Oct 00	03 Nov 00	10 Nov 00	20 Nov 00	20 Nov 00
May/Jun/Jul	22 Jan 01	23 Jan 01	02 Feb 01	09 Feb 01	19 Feb 01	19 Feb 01
Aug/Sep/Oct	23 Apr 01	24 Apr 01	04 May 01	11 May 01	21 May 01	21 May 01
Nov/Dec/Jan	24 Jul 00	25 Jul 00	04 Aug 00	11 Aug 00	21 Aug 00	21 Aug 00

Table 5.1. Overseas Returnee Cycle Program.

<b>RNLTD</b>	<b>OPTIONS TO MPF</b>	<b>AVAIL TO CUSTOMER</b>	<b>PREF DUE</b>	<b>BULK</b>	<b>PDS FLOW</b>	<b>RELEASE</b>
Jul/Aug/Sep	06 Nov 00	07 Nov 00	17 Nov 00	24 Nov 00	04 Dec 00	04 Dec 00
Oct/Nov/Dec	05 Feb 01	06 Feb 01	16 Feb 01	23 Feb 01	05 Mar 01	05 Mar 01
Jan./ Feb/ Mar	08 May 01	09 May 01	19 May 01	26 May 01	05 Jun 01	05 Jun 01
Apr/May/Jun	07 Aug 00	08 Aug 00	18 Aug 00	25 Aug 00	04 Sep 00	04 Sep 00

Table 5.2. Overseas Cycle Program.

### 1. Job Advertisement Process

Before jobs can be advertised by personnel at DPAA, database access must be granted by the OPR, DPAAS2 to MAJCOMs to enter information into EQUAL/EQUAL Plus. Information cannot be modified by the MAJCOMs once entered. Assignment NCOs at HQ AFPC approve the requested advertisements. Additionally, they monitor

the job status. This means they close out the job when an individual is selected, or by the date of expiration. They may also extend the job advertisement, if necessary (see Figure 5.4 for a diagram of the process timelines).

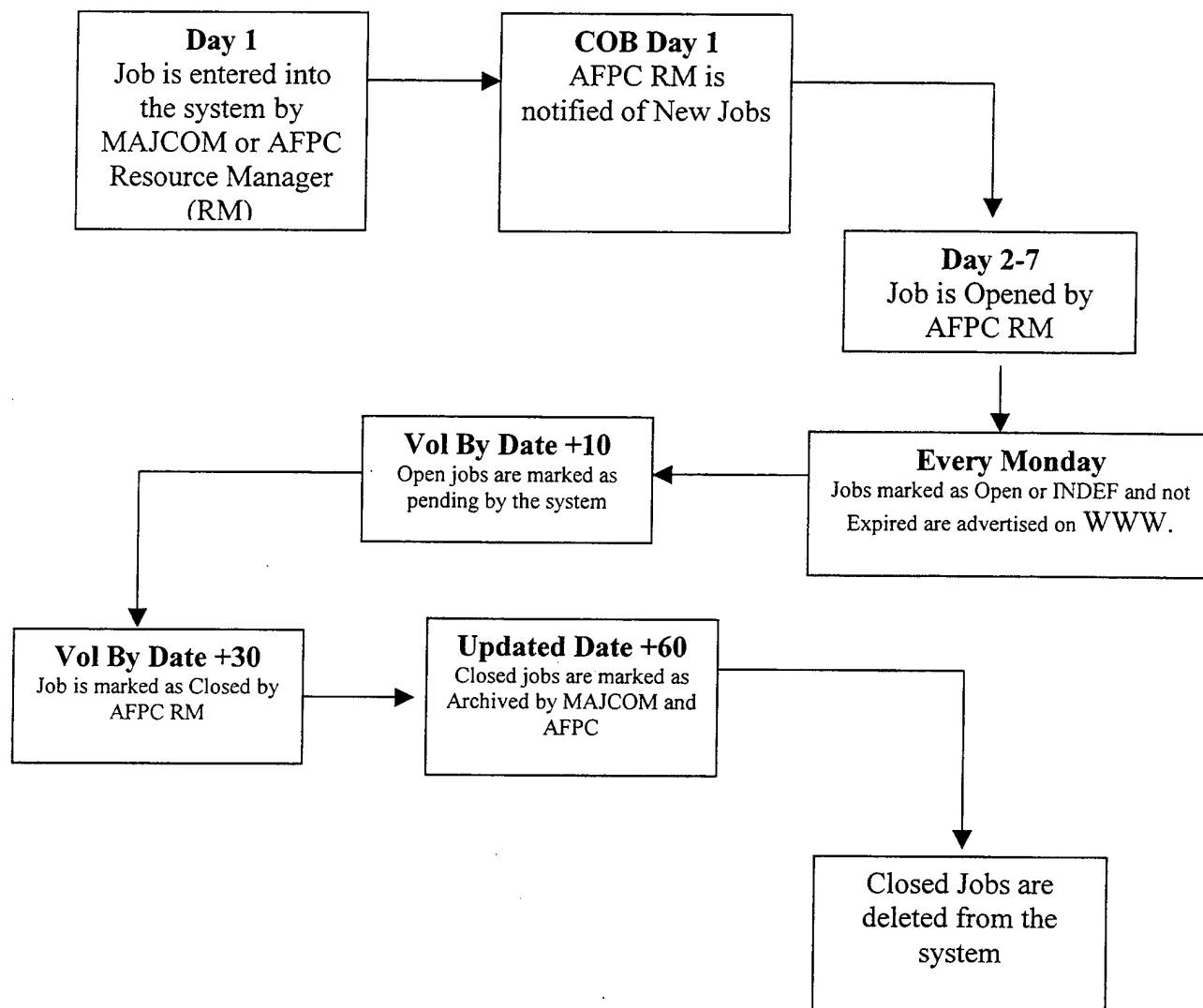


Figure 5.4. Job Assignment Process adapted from DPAA Operating Instruction 36-2110, June 2000.

## 2. CONUS Requirements

CONUS Requirements are advertised differently in the EQUAL process. Since priority manning requirements are overseas, EQUAL is designed to accomplish overseas

manning goals first. An airman may want to go to a certain base in CONUS, and hears the job is available, but the system may not advertise another job there because the job does not meet fair share entitlements determined by manpower requirements. The system is not designed to accommodate airmen at the expense of fair share considerations. Just because there is a vacancy does not mean there absolutely has to be a corresponding assignment generated. Manpower and personnel do not necessarily align to fill every vacancy; vacancies include every authorization that is not filled. Some authorizations are left vacant based on Air Force-wide manning levels.

On average, the Air Force fills 92 % of requirements for CONUS commands. If there are three CONUS commands with one meeting 92 % of requirements and two other commands below 92%, the Air Force tries to assign airmen to the command with the lowest level of entitlements filled, to bring all the commands as close to fair share equilibrium as possible (Ref 23). The basic premise of the assignment process is to man authorized strength numbers to the commands with the most urgent needs, or biggest shortfalls (See Figure 5.5).

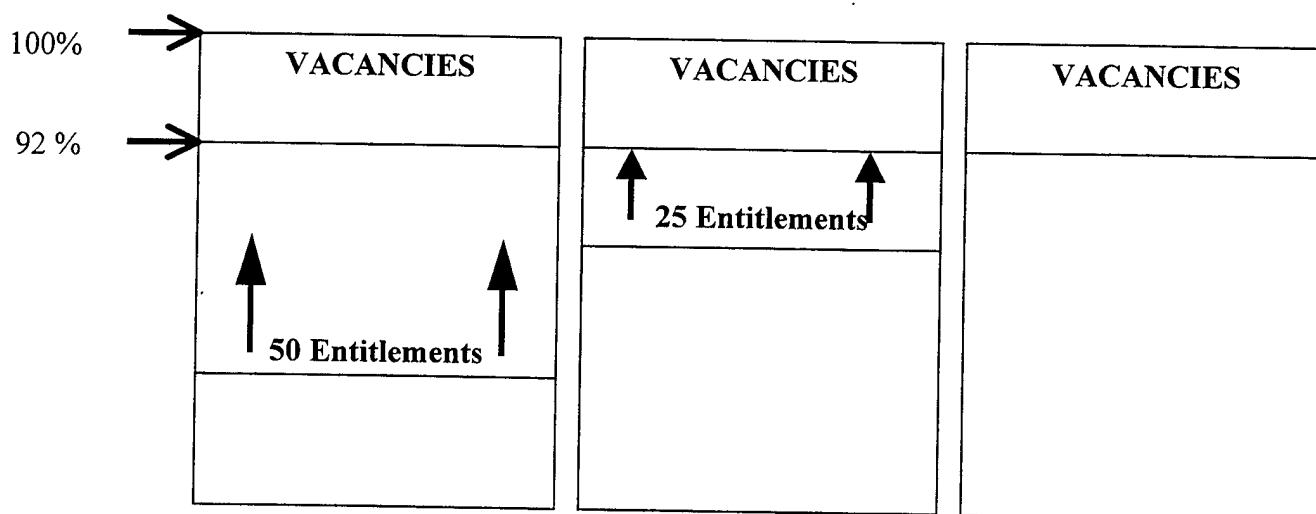


Figure 5.5. CONUS Requirements: Fair Share Resources.

### **3. Overseas Allocation Cycles**

The AF sends thousands of people to and from OS theaters each year. EQUAL cannot be part of the process until allocation occurs. Allocations are simply spaces held in a computer 9 to 11 months in advance of overseas reporting. These allocations are based on manning levels at overseas commands. MAJOCMs play the key role in reviewing validating, and changing allocations as needed. Once requirements are validated, HQ AFPC (DPAA for enlisted assignments) advertises the requirements using EQUAL, or EQUAL Plus for special duty assignments. Personnel are then allowed to update their preferences in the EQUAL system. If a person chooses not to update their preferences, they must take the assignment directed by DPAAD. If the person accepts an assignment they cannot usually update their preferences and ask for another assignment until the next rotation period. Jobs are matched to the most eligible names or faces to fill requirements. MPF has review authority over the names submitted and the losing commander makes recommendations on the person's qualifications.

#### **D. USING THE EQUAL AND EQUAL PLUS SYSTEM**

An airman can review the overseas EQUAL to see what overseas assignments will be made. Using that information, they can volunteer for up to eight assignment preferences, using either individual base codes or country codes from the advertised requirements. However, listing a specific base limits selection as a volunteer to just that base alone and no other bases in that particular country. For example, if the EQUAL lists a requirement with a person's AFSC and grade at both Base A and Base B in the same country, the volunteer can apply for assignments at either base, but if the person only lists Base A as an overseas preference and not Base B, voluntary assignment to Base B will not be considered. In other words, the airman has more choices by selecting assignments

by country code and not restricting selection to an individual base. If more than one advertised EQUAL requirement is listed, all preferences are considered equally for assignment purposes as long as airmen are eligible for selection, and selections are made according to the Air Force selection priorities.

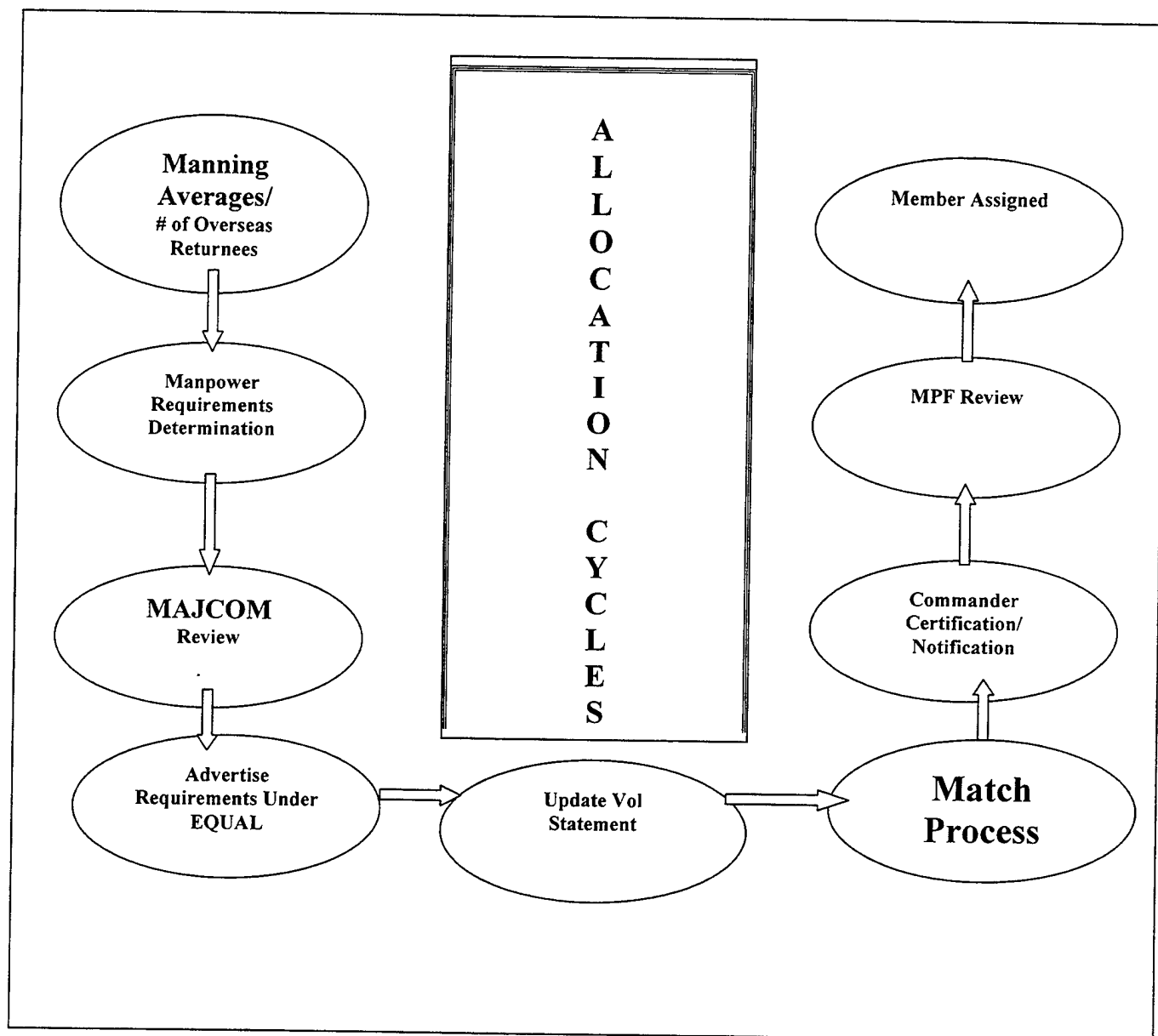


Figure 5.6 Overseas Allocation Cycles.

Overseas returnees use the overseas returnees EQUAL to align their CONUS assignment preferences to those locations listed, with the exception of military couples seeking co-location. It's understood that the requirements advertised may not be true "personal assignment preferences," meaning there will be preferred assignments based on an individual's taste that are not available due to the rotation cycle. But EQUAL reflects those assignments which will be made, so ignoring or failing to prioritize the advertised requirements means the airman will receive the remaining assignments after all those who do volunteer.

Military couples desiring overseas assignment together, where an accompanied tour is authorized, must use the overseas EQUAL to volunteer for overseas assignments. If requirements exist for both, and one is the most eligible volunteer, both will be selected for assignment. However, military couples who are overseas returnees do not use the overseas returnee EQUAL, as CONUS requirements for returning military couples are not advertised. Because of the unique grade and AFSC make up of military couples, returnee assignments are hand-matched. Returning joint spouse couples must maintain matching and current CONUS preferences, which will be considered during the assignment match. To ensure joint spouse assignments, military couples must have a code of intent listed in the personnel system.

The EQUAL Plus was developed as a result of the need to advertise special and short-notice requirements that provide an alternative to EQUAL. The types of jobs advertised within EQUAL Plus are: hard to fill locations and short notice requirements, Special Category (SPECAT) jobs, and jobs with unique and specialized qualifications.



### **1. Hard to Fill and Short Notice Requirements**

These jobs primarily involve short tours that usually must be filled with very little advance notice. The EQUAL Plus system allows an individual who might not have a problem with a short notice fill with a short tour pay off to volunteer rather than fill the job with another individual who does have a hardship.

### **2. SPECAT**

There are jobs available that require specialization, such as Military Training Instructor (MTI) and Professional Military Education (PME) instructors, that are categorized as open end assignments. Open end assignments are requirements that continually exist in the distribution pipeline.

### **3. Unique and specialized Qualifications**

This category allows advertising for truly unique requirements. The requirements cannot be tailored in such a way that only a specific individual is able to fill it. Area representatives must review and validate each request individually.

Airmen desiring to volunteer for a particular advertisement in the EQUAL Plus may update their application at either the CSS or MPF, or through the worldwide web (See Figure 5.7). The application must contain the specific job number reflected in the EQUAL-Plus ad. In addition, some SDAs also require a hard copy application. CMSgts apply for advertised requirements by contacting their assignment NCO or the POC listed on the advertisement.

AMS - Enlisted Assignments	
■ Assignments List	■ CONUS Assignment Exchange
■ Enlisted Authorized	■ Manage Equal Plus Ads
■ Search Equal Plus Ads	■ Equal Plus Administration
■ AMS Web Main Menu	
EQUAL Plus Assignments Listing	
Rank	AFSC
Tsgt ▼	
	All AFSC 1A00- INFLIGHT REFULER MGR 1A011 - INFLIGHT REF HLPR

Figure 5.7. AMS Assignment EQUAL/EQUAL Plus Listing.

## E. CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter highlights the organization of the AFPC airman assignment process. Looking at the organization in a systems prospective, clearer understanding of how a complex distribution process can benefit from using technology. Knowing where the organization stands and how it employs a web-based system to meet the needs of so many provides opportunities to expand that technology into other personnel management processes.

The next chapter gives credence to how a simple idea like EQUAL and EQUAL Plus spurs innovation beyond primary stakeholders to use “best practices” to strengthen other areas of personnel management and distribution.

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## **VI. THE BENEFITS OF ASSIGNMENT RE-ENGINEERING FOR AIR FORCE ENLISTED PERSONNEL**

This thesis describes the current manpower and personnel process in the United States Air Force. In doing so, current management system models are used to analyze the direction and design of the Air Force assignment process. Future leaders should look at the potential offered by using a centralized assignment system and current technology in job match opportunities.

This thesis shows the Air Force's current status and where it is going in the future. Current changes in the Air Force Assignment process have lead to initiatives that will further enhance the AFPC business practices for equitably distributing valuable manpower resources while meeting the needs of all competing stakeholders, including primary stakeholders, secondary stakeholders, and external stakeholders to the future assignment process (see Figure 6.1). This chapter summarizes the Air Force's personnel management re-engineering based on the ideals of Information Technology IT-enabled change as broadened by the use of job matching technology (EQUAL and EQUAL Plus). If other services look at the similarities in the AF assignment process, they might find that changing the way they do business may actually reduce spending and increase retention. This chapter describes the improvements in the Air Force assignment and personnel process.

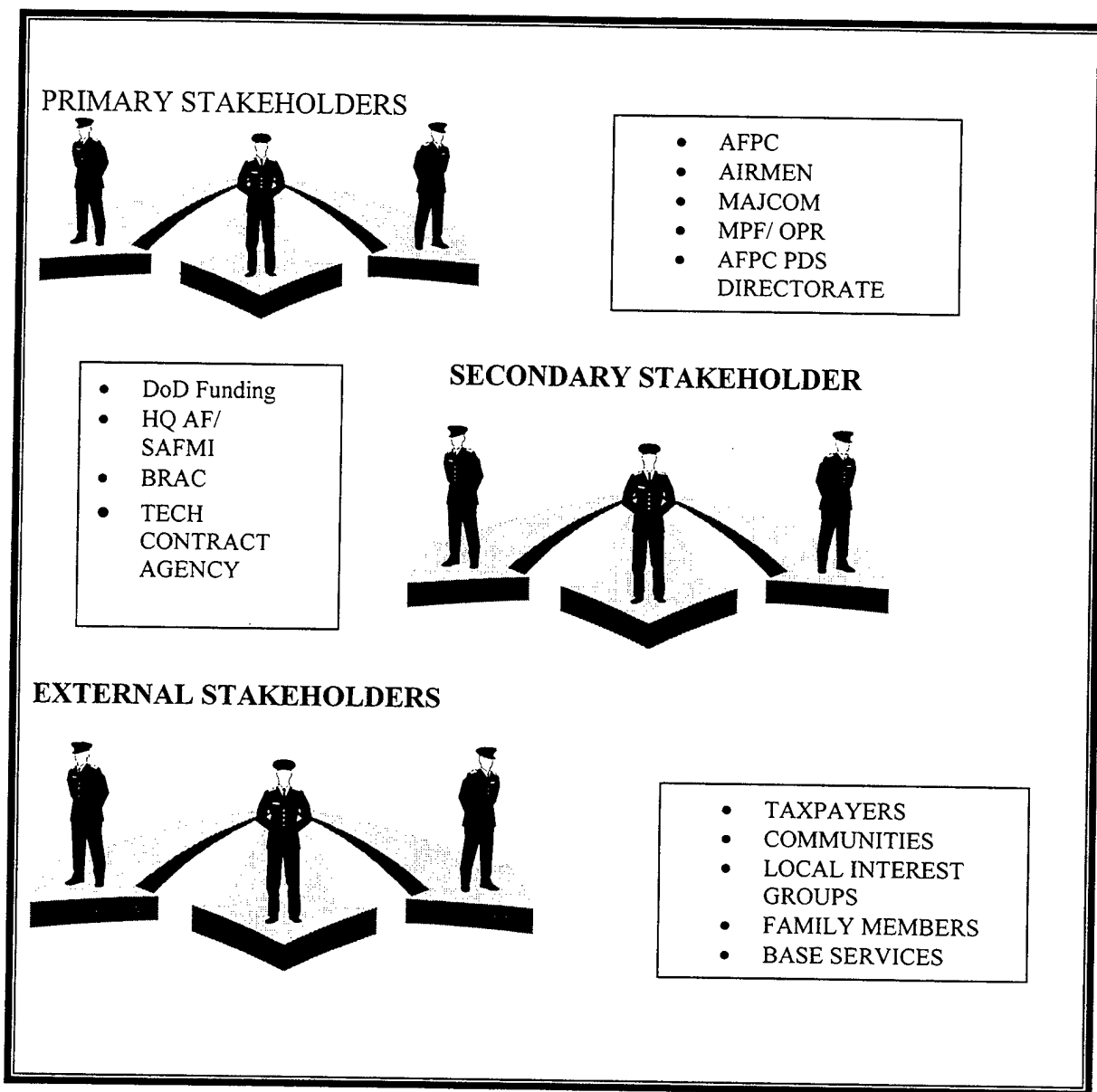


Figure 6.1. Stakeholder Map for the Personnel Re-engineering.

#### A. BACKGROUND

The Air Force is refining some of its enlisted assignment procedures - enhancing assignment opportunities for people, while allowing the service to fulfill its mission. As early as the summer of 1996, Brigadier General Susam Pamerleau, Head of the AFPC, announced the induction of EQUAL (Ref 24). In a team effort with the Air Force's

senior leadership, commanders in the field, assignment officers at AFPC and at major commands -- along with input from members throughout the ranks, General Pamerleau implemented these changes to enhance the quality of life of Air Force people and their families.

"It still allows the Air Force to accomplish its mission, while at the same time takes better care of our people. It's also the right thing to do," she said (Ref 25).

Specifically, the first change impacts remote assignments. It allows the Air Force to provide a 100 percent opportunity for enlisted members to request a Follow-On (FO) assignment before they go on a remote tour. This means that people can request bases or areas at the time of their departure for the remote tour. Based on the needs of the Air Force, the personnel center began matching members to those bases or areas right away.

According to General Pamerleau:

It's difficult leaving your family for a year to complete a remote tour. By implementing 100 percent opportunity, our Air Force members will know where they're going after their remote tour earlier and can make future plans accordingly, allowing for more family stability. It also allows the person to concentrate on their job while remote and not worry about their follow-on assignment.

The Air Force can do this because it's a much smaller force since the drawdown began. In the mid-1980's, about 35,000 people a year completed remote tours. Now the figure is approximately 11,000. Currently, 44 percent of all enlisted people already know their return assignment before going remote because of home basing. This change will take better care of the other 56 percent. It also establishes a system to extend the program to officers. There were simply too many people to do this in the past, but with a smaller force it's manageable now. Another big reason we can do this is the advent of technology. Despite the active duty force drawing down 23 percent and AFPC drawing down 30 percent since 1991, we've actually been able increase service to our customers. We can do it because we're using technology specifically benefiting people in a smart and efficient manner (Ref 26).

The spread of web-based assignment matching has since been broadened to meet the needs of a larger sector of Air Force Personnel distribution.

**B. AIR FORCE ENLISTED PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT RE-ENGINEERING PLAN**

New innovations in enlisted assignments have forced the Air Force to utilize "best practices" that make optimal use of manpower and technological resources. The FY00-05 Annual Planning and Programming Guidance (APPG) requires all Air Force functional managers to re-engineer their processes to eliminate unfunded mandates and seek Air Force Corporate Structure review/approval for required funding levels by FY05. Personnel re-engineering will increase process efficiencies across all levels (Air Staff, Major Commands (MAJCOMs), Air Force Personnel Center (AFPC), and base-level), and generate base-level manpower standards. This plan will help the Air Force achieve its manning goals and increase the potential for equality, while enabling the CONUS commands to reach these fair share entitlements.

Since the Personnel functional community owns numerous processes that significantly impact personnel assignment in the U.S. Air Force, it is critical that Personnel Divisions establish a holistic, integrated plan for reengineering core processes. Such a plan has been devised to streamline assignment processes to aide enlisted service members with minimal disruption to the Air Force Personnel Center. To that end, the Air Force Personnel Reengineering Action Plan, developed in June 1999, recognizes that the Air Force Personnel environment has changed significantly since the last major review of functions (Ref 27). Like all functional communities, Personnel has experienced the numerous issues that are a source of constant turbulence: BRAC, Modernization, Total

Force Management, Previous drawdowns, Defense Reform Initiatives (DRI), and sustainability in meeting a two theater wartime requirement.

Lieutenant General Donald L. Peterson, Deputy Chief of Staff, Personnel (AF/DP) recently explained the importance of technology in making changes to the personnel system. He claims technology will give both the service members and the personnel at AFPC more time to do other things to benefit the customer and the Air Force. Lt Gen Peterson stated, "Our Personnelists should be working with customers to the maximum extent possible. We can make greater use of the web for those processes that don't require human interaction and save Personnelists' time. Let's put the human touch into the equation." (Ref 28). Many programs have been implemented to reduce wasted man-hours and increase the retention rates. The Air Force's ongoing efforts in assignments for enlisted personnel are less bureaucratic and more flexible to everyone involved. The idea is to create a system that is responsive instead of reactive, thus fostering strategic implementation.

Lt Gen Peterson also noted the need to set certain criteria for evaluating each process in changing the AFPC priorities in assignments. Four criteria were cited:

- **Potential manpower savings** keyed on existing processes that are labor intensive or currently require large numbers of people, and assumed there would be a large manpower savings should reengineering efforts take place. It included resources at all levels involved with the process.
- **Feasibility** addressed the likelihood of successful reengineering considering obstacles which might prevent reengineering efforts from getting started or cause them to stall after they were initiated, (e.g., political pressures, "pet projects," etc.). It also accounted for those processes not entirely owned by the Personnel community, thereby requiring coordination with external organizations.



- **Implementation cost** included resources necessary to implement reengineered processes. For example, it considered the projected need for new technology to implement reengineered processes.
- **Time to complete reengineering study** considered the amount of time a Reengineering Study Team may require to reengineer a given process. The Tiger Team felt that several of the processes would be comparatively simpler to reengineer and thus could be concluded quickly. Other, more involved processes would require more time to reengineer (Ref 29).

Smart business practices, as they relate to the assignment process, have increased the Air Force's ability to efficiently manage the precious resources needed to procure systems, maintain the infrastructure that supports them, and ensure a reasonable quality of life for their people. As explained below, some of the ongoing initiatives are substantially increasing the retention rates among enlisted personnel.

#### **C. BASE OF PREFERENCE (BOP)**

Changes to the Base of Preference (BOP) Program have benefited more than 1,500 Air Force people who have taken advantage of the expanded program since August 2000. Around 94 percent of first term airmen who put in an application for base of preference had their request approved. As a bonus, many career airmen have statistically the same approval rates (Ref 30).

In an attempt to improve retention and maintain stability, the Air Force Personnel Center expanded the eligibility criteria for the Base of Preference Program in August 2000. The new program now gives first-term and career airmen an opportunity to apply for a CONUS to CONUS assignment. Originally, this option was only offered to more senior personnel through EQUAL Plus. First-termers can even receive a BOP returning from an overseas assignment if they meet the eligibility criteria.

"The change to the base of preference program is a win-win situation for Air Force members," said Col. Dwayne Hafer, chief of Airman Assignments Division. "When you can place people where they want to be, you're going to have people who want to stay with us. Retention is the primary reason why the chief (Air Force Chief of Staff) approved this program. This is one of the most effective ways to improve Air Force retention." (Ref 31).

The percentage of first term airmen approved becomes even more apparent when considering the high volume of applications the DPAAD have received since the change. According to Fred Beard, Chief, Airman Management Branch, "We have made decisions on more than 2,000 applications since September. Currently, we have more than 3,000 applications awaiting assessment. Our assignment folks are working long hours to review each and every application. They are making every effort to put people where they want to be." (Ref 32).

The initial statistics for the BOP program prior to August 2000 are as follows:

- 95 percent of first-term airmen who have not retrained had their applications approved (189 out of 199).
- 93 percent of first-term airmen who have retrained had their applications approved (232 out of 249).
- 57 percent of career airmen had their applications approved (1,121 out of 1,967).
- Overall, 63 percent of airmen who applied were approved (1,542 out of 2,429).

Col. Hafer explains there is more statistical relevance to the program:

Initially when someone looks at the career airman numbers, they might think they're not that good. But what they've got to remember is that before the chief approved the career BOP program, there was no way someone was going to get to choose where they would be going without doing a remote, choosing a follow-on, or the Voluntary Enlisted Conus

Assignment Program (VECAP), which required six years time on station to move. This program now gives career airmen someplace they can call home -- someplace with a little stability." (Ref 33).

"A person really didn't have that many choices when it came to deciding where they wanted to go," said TSgt. Charles Mims, NCOIC of Computer Operations, Cheyenne Mountain, Colo. Mims, a career airman with 17 years of service, who recently received a BOP to Langley AFB, Va.

"This change to the BOP program gives people a choice and improves morale," he said. "I was stationed at Langley before and really liked it. I wanted to go back for the end of my career and the BOP made that happen." (Ref 34).

All BOP applicants may request up to eight CONUS bases. Those requesting more than one will be considered in priority order. "If we can work your first choice, it's game over. If not, we'll take a look at your second choice and try to make that happen," said Hafer. If none of the preferences can be worked, the airman may immediately apply for other bases, as long as they remain eligible. Additionally, they can re-apply for the same bases six months later to see if manning has changed at that base.

The exception is for first-term airmen. Since their BOP application is submitted in conjunction with re-enlistment and retraining, they will be unable to submit multiple applications. But they will be offered three alternatives immediately if their initial choices can't be approved. "If the retention numbers increase at all, then this program definitely had a positive impact," said Hafer.

#### **D. MILITARY MODERNIZATION (MILMOD)**

The AF has undergone a transformation in the Personal Data System processing currently used to assign members CONUS and OS. Now all personnel processes are

under the same system, managed by Military Modernization (MILMOD). MILMOD is the name symbolizing the modernized Personnel Data System (PDS). It is a new-age system employing client-server and relational database management technologies. The host software is provided by Oracle Corporation (Ref 35). This is done under a client-server basis, meaning a transaction is entered into MILMOD, then the transaction instantaneously comes to AFPC. They can find the record requested on the database machine, perform the requested action, and then quickly respond back on the success or failure of the intended action. To sum it up, all personnel records (Guard, Reserve, Active Duty) will be at AFPC and serviced from the field. The term client-server simply means the application software used in performing day-to-day transactions is on a desktop computer (the client) and all the data resides on the file server/database machines at AFPC (the server).

There are many users of MILMOD. It cuts across all Air Force components: Active Duty, Air National Guard, and Reserve along with Military Personnel Flights (MPFs), Education Centers, Satellite Personnel Activities, Direct Reporting Units (DRUs), Major Air Commands (MAJCOMs), the Air Force Personnel Center (AFPC), the Air Reserve Personnel Center (ARPC), and the Air Staff Department of Personnel (AF/DP). There are approximately 15,000 individual MILMOD users all together. Essentially, the information system used in the past, PDS, is now the MILMOD of the future.

Until the legacy PDS is terminated in March 2001, the system is known as MILMOD. In April 2001, AFPC management will rename MILMOD to something more descriptive such as "AFPDS." (Ref 36). The DPAAD has already incorporated new

applications for EQUAL and EQUAL Plus operations. The new configuration is customer friendly and combines DPAAD operations with other services provided by AFPC (See Table 6.1/6.2).

Step Name	Description	Result
Step 1	Select Dover AFB MPF from the responsibility window and click the OK button.	Navigator screen will appear.
Step 2	Highlight Customer Support and click the open button, Customer Service is highlighted, click the open button. Highlight Assignment Applications and click the open button.	Assignments folder will appear
Step 3	Click on Query then click Enter or press "F7" Select a name and enter last name in the Full Name Block followed by a % sign Click on Query then click Run or press "F8"	The top line will be filled in with members info (or a List of names will appear)
Step 4	Select the record you chose. At the bottom of the screen click on the Assignment App button	Extra Assignment Information screen for Assignment Applications will appear
Step 5	Move cursor to the next empty "shaded" details block and click in it. Then move cursor over to the details block and click in it	Further assignment information screen will appear
Step 6	The "Creation Date" is automatically updated with current date. Move Cursor to the Voluntary Reassignment Program block Click on LOV to view list of Voluntary Reassignment programs	List of Voluntary Reassignment Programs will appear
Step 7	Select EQUAL Plus (Z) and click OK	You will return to the Further Assignment Information screen
Step 8	Fill in the request date area (in the format DD-MON-YYYY) with the date the member applies for the job NOTE: MUST BE CURRENT DATE.	The cursor will be in the Status block.
Step 9	Tab down to the Equal Plus Job # Block The EQUAL-Plus listing (which provides the six-digit EQUAL-Plus #) is updated weekly and is available through the MPF, the CSS, or on the AFPC Worldwide Web page. HOWEVER, for this test, please enter the numbers 555555 Click OK button or press Enter	Extra Assignment Information screen will appear
Step 10	Click on Action then click Close Form	Forms screen will appear asking "Do you want to save the changes you have made?"
Step 11	Save your update by clicking on the "Yes" button	Message will appear stating Transaction complete: 1 record applied and saved.
Step 12	Click "OK" on the message screen	Assignments folder will appear.
Step 13	Click on Action then click Close Form	Navigator screen will appear.

Table 6.1. EQUAL Plus Applications.

Step Name	Description	Expected Result
Step 1	Select Dover AFB from the responsibility window and click the OK button.	Navigator screen will appear.
Step 2	Highlight Customer Support and click the open button, Customer Service is highlighted, click the open button. Highlight Assignment Applications and click the open button.	Assignments folder will appear

Step 3	Click on Query then click Enter or press "F7" Select a name and enter the last name in the Full Name block followed by a % sign Click on Query then click Run or press "F8"	The top line will be filled in with members info (or a List of names will appear)
Step 4	Choose the record you selected by clicking on that name At the bottom of the screen click on the Assignment App button	Extra Assignment Information screen for Assignment Applications will appear
Step 5	Move cursor to the next empty "shaded" details block and click in it. Then move cursor over to details block and click in it.	Further assignment information screen will appear
Step 6	The "Creation Date" is automatically updated with current date. Move Cursor to the Voluntary Reassignment Program block Click on LOV to view list of Voluntary Reassignment programs	List of Voluntary Reassignment Programs will appear
Step 7	Select Assignment Preference/Equal (1) and click OK	The Voluntary Reassignment Program area will show a "1" (Assignment Preference/Equal)
Step 8	Fill in the request date area (in the format DD-MON-YYYY) with the current date Click on OK button at bottom right or press Enter	Extra Assignment Information screen will appear and the details block will show that the member updated EQUAL Assignment Program
Step 9	Go to the tool bar and Click on the "Yellow Disk" to commit your record	Note Screen will appear advising to ensure desired CONUS and/or Overseas Preferences are updated
Step 10	Click the OK button	Forms Screen will appear stating Transaction complete: 1 record applied and saved.
Step 11	Click the OK on the note screen	The Extra Assignment Information Screen will appear
Step 12	Click on the CONUS Preference Button NOTE: You are able to update CONUS and/or Overseas Preferences and can update the preferences in any order(i.e., CONUS first, Overseas 2nd or Overseas 1st and CONUS 2nd or just update one or the other--not both)	The Extra Assignment Screen will appear for updating CONUS Preferences
Step 13	Move cursor to the next empty "shaded" details block and click in it. Then move cursor over to the details block and click in it.	Further assignment information screen will appear and the cursor will be flashing in the 1st Preference block
Step 14	Click on LOV and select desired CONUS preference (select preferences in ranking order - 1st preference being most preferred) Click OK button at the bottom of the screen (continue to execute these actions until desired number of CONUS preferences are selected - a maximum of eight CONUS preferences may be selected)	You will return to the Further Assignment Screen after each update
Step 15	Click the OK button at bottom right or press enter	The Extra Assignment Information screen will appear
Step 16	Click on the Return button at the bottom of the screen	Forms screen will appear asking "Do you want to save the changes you have made?"
Step 17	Save your update by clicking on the "Yes" button	Message will appear stating Transaction complete: 1 records applied and saved
Step 18	Click OK on the message screen	Extra Assignment Information screen for Assignment Applications will appear
Step 19	To update Overseas preferences: Click on Overseas Prefs button	Extra Assignment Information screen for Overseas preferences will appear

Step 20	Click in the next empty details block	Further Assignment Information screen will appear and the cursor will be flashing in the 1st Preference block
Step 21	Click on LOV and select desired Overseas preference (select preferences in ranking order - 1st preference being most preferred) and click the OK button	Further Assignment Information screen will appear and the cursor will be flashing in the Vol Stat block
Step 22	Click on LOV and select the type of tour you're volunteering for. This LOV will vary based on the Overseas location selected. They will be (Long, Extended Long, or Short) or (Long or Short) or (Long, Extended Long, Short, or NON-CONUS Resident) or some locations that are short tour select, you won't get a LOV as Vol STAT will be automatically updated with a "3" short tour. NOTE: For this test, if you select Alaska or Hawaii, please don't use the Vol STAT NON-CONUS Resident as it will probably reject. (repeat steps 21 and 22 until desired number of Overseas preferences are selected, up to 8 Overseas preferences can be input) Click on OK button	Extra Assignment Information screen will appear with details block indicating members overseas preferences
Step 23	Click on the Return button at the bottom of the screen	Forms screen will appear asking "Do you want to save the changes you have made?"
Step 24	Click on the yes button	Forms screen will appear Transaction Complete: 1 Record applied and saved
Step 25	Click OK on the message screen	Extra Assignment Information screen for Assignment Applications will appear
Step 26	Click on Action then Click Close Form	The Assignments Folder will appear
Step 27	Click on Action then click Close Form	The Navigator window will appear

Table 6.2. EQUAL Applications.

## E. CAREER ASSISTANCE ADVISORS

Retention isn't just an Air Force buzz word; it's the responsibility of all front-line supervisors to help make first- and second-term airmen the right decision. To help them out, wings now have a career assistance advisor who is the focal point for all retention issues (Ref 37). Master Sgt. Mike Bottoms, wing CAA, acknowledges the important role he plays in assisting the airmen waiting in the wings to serve their country. The obstacles the Air Force has to confront include the economy, and perceptions that the military does not take care of its people. For instance, there is a general belief that military benefits have eroded for those retiring, making it difficult to send young airmen to less desirable

locations. The CAA is there to counter the myth by educating commanders, supervisors, and airmen through a seminar called "Right Decision." (Ref 38).

The "Right Decision" seminar, began in November 2000 and features a panel of senior NCOs and officers who speak about their own careers and explain why they decided to stay in. "This is not arm twisting," Bottoms said. "I just want people to make an informed decision that's not based on their emotions or misinformation. The primary purpose is to explain benefits the Air Force provides."

The CAA is the point person for commanders, supervisors and first sergeants to go to on issues such as retraining, reenlistment, benefits and other career decisions. The AF takes a definitive ground on the fact that top leadership is accountable for educating the enlisted but the induction of CAA gives them the tools they need to accomplish the task. Lt. Col. Jan Middleton, chief of retention policy and personnel, in a recent interview with Air Force Print News states, "Our first-line supervisors and commanders still have the primary responsibility to mentor and provide feedback to their troops." (Ref 39). She also considers the needs of the "total force" concept where all areas work together to have career advisors counsel airmen who are seriously considering separation from Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve opportunities.

The new position, which was created for all wings, came about as an initiative recommended by a Retention Summit held in April 2000. Although the new CAA position is similar to the old Base Career Advisors (BCA), it's not the same. The biggest change from the old position is the target audience. CAAs will target first-term, second-term and career-minded airmen, while the old career advisors concentrated primarily on first term airmen. "The philosophy then was once you got an airman to re-enlist, then



you had him or her for 20 years. Obviously that is not the case today," Bottoms said in the interview. "In the past, the BCA did pretty much all the career benefits counseling. The CAA program is not meant to abdicate supervisory responsibilities for career counseling." (Ref 40). The CAA designation creates a checks and balance system for senior personnel to advocate continued service for all enlisted personnel in the Air Force. "The career assistance advisors will serve a key role in the communication process between base commanders and the troops in the field," noted Senior Master Sgt. Carol Dockery, superintendent of retention policy at the air staff. (Ref 41).

The CAA serves as a conduit between commanders and the base enlisted personnel. They are tasked with the responsibility to ensure commanders know what's on the minds of their personnel and also that their people are getting the information they need to make informed career decisions. The Air Force is slated to fill about 78 positions this year. The advisors will be there to help airmen and NCOs in making career decisions, whether to stay in or to get out, as well as, make available information and advice on benefits, pay, career counseling and also information about Reserve, Guard and civil service opportunities. Face to face interaction is the Air Force's goal regarding the CAAs. Retention at all levels of the service is the desired outcome for this new role.

#### **F. RETENTION**

At a Retention Summit held by the Air Force in April 2000, leaders were asked to identify issues that would affect the overall retention rate among personnel. Although many of the enlisted seem to show a strong sense of service to their country, there were some issues that seem to signal that airmen did not have a strong sense of security about their future. Deploying a system like EQUAL and EQUAL Plus is a step in the right

direction as far as giving enlisted members some autonomy and access to information about their next assignment choices. However, the group realized this had to be taken a step further. The group reviewed a Quality of Life (QOL) survey taken in 1999 and considered steps to enhance issues that influenced an airman's reasons to stay. Along with having a preference in assignments, the survey in Table 6-3 reveals a need to get the force information about benefits and education. This resulted in the developing CAA.

Any information system can provide a means for obtaining data, but the Air Force saw the need to take it a step further and help people understand how the information can benefit them. Colonel Middleton, Chief of Retention, Personnel stated at the summit, "The overarching theme throughout this whole process is communication." (Ref 42). Lt Col Peterson, Deputy Chief of Staff, Air Force Personnel Center summed up the overriding goal of any process related to the retention of personnel as, "We will continue to focus our efforts on retaining our people. Every single person wearing the Air Force uniform is critical to mission success and we need to ensure they are taken care of. We are very positive about the future of the Air Force and that our men and women will continue to serve in the manner that makes our Air Force the best in the world." (Ref 43).

All Enlisted	2000 n=2,025	1999 n=320	1996 n=1,114
	"Very Strong" or "Strong"	"Very Strong" or "Strong"	"Very Strong" or "Strong"
	Influence	Influence	Influence
	[Rank/% of 38 Items]	[Rank/% of 29 Items]	[Rank/% of 23 Items]
Patriotism	1 / 64	*	*
Job security	2 / 58	4 / 47	1 / 61

Opportunity for education and training	3 / 51	2 / 55	3 / 48
Availability of medical care	4 / 45	1 / 57	2 / 56
Retirement program that affects you	5 / 42	10 / 34	4 / 46
Availability of dependent medical care	6 / 42	3 / 49	5 / 43
Overall job satisfaction	7 / 41	8 / 36	6 / 38
Choice of job assignment	8 / 41	7 / 37	8 / 29
Say in base of assignment	9 / 37	6 / 37	9 / 27
Bonuses/Special Pay	10 / 35	22 / 17	*
Geographic area/current base	11 / 33	*	*
Promotion opportunity	12 / 32	12 / 30	16 / 16
Equal employment opportunities in the AF	13 / 32	*	*
Availability of dental care	14 / 32	5 / 46	7 / 32
On-base fitness/recreation programs	15 / 31	13 / 28	*
Availability of commissary services	16 / 29	11 / 30	13 / 22
Availability of dependent dental care	17 / 28	9 / 35	12 / 24
Recognition of your efforts	18 / 24	16 / 24	11 / 26
Compatibility with spouse's career/job	19 / 24	27 / 12	22 / 7
Availability of base housing	20 / 24	14 / 26	*
Pay and allowances	21 / 23	15 / 25	10 / 27
Leadership at unit level	22 / 22	19 / 19	14 / 22
On-base child care/youth programs	23 / 21	18 / 19	*
Availability of base exchange	24 / 18	21 / 18	*
Home station TEMPO (Work schedule)	25 / 17	17 / 19	(15 / 17)
Leadership at wing or equivalent level	26 / 16	23 / 15	*
Number of PCS moves	27 / 16	25 / 13	18 / 14
Readiness of your unit	28 / 16	*	*
Training/experience of unit personnel	29 / 15	*	*
Leadership at MAJCOM/HQ USAF level	30 / 13	24 / 15	19 / 13
Availability of comparable civilian jobs	31 / 12	20 / 18	17 / 16
Unit resources	32 / 12	*	*
TEMPO away (Number/duration of TDYs)	33 / 11	28 / 11	(20 / 8)-
Implementation of Expeditionary AF	34 / 9	*	*
Number of personnel currently in my unit	35 / 8	*	*
AF officer/enlisted evaluation systems	36 / 7	26 / 13	21 / 8
Potential for outsourcing and privatization	37 / 6	*	*
Amount of additional duties	38 / 5	29 / 10	23 / 3

Table 6.3. Enlisted Influences to Stay.  
Note: \* indicates no comparable item for that year  
Source: 1999

## G. CHAPTER SUMMARY

Retention is crucial in meeting the missions of all the military services. This chapter identifies the Air Force's commitment to re-engineering processes that affect the service member's stay or leave decision. As indicated by the Quality of Life (QOL) Survey, airmen rank choice of assignment high on the list of influences to stay. In a

budget constrained agency like the Air Force with a complicated process for getting “faces” to “spaces,” change must occur at all levels in the manpower and personnel process to meet the needs of the people and the organization.

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## **VII. SUMMARY**

### **A. BEST PRACTICES TECHNOLOGY**

By the 1980s, the Internet was emerging in the civilian world. Businesses began using web-based technology in the 1990's and interactive retail became a common norm. The USAF developed its own Web sites, including one at the AFPC. Until recently, however, members could only view information, not act on it. Then, with development of the Assignment Management System, service members were allowed to enter their assignment preferences and react in other limited ways to the information that the Air Force provided. EQUAL and eventually, EQUAL Plus, was created to bring interactivity to the forefront of personnel management and distribution. The birth of computer aided assignment matching at AFPC continues to ignite process improvements aimed at retaining an all-volunteer force in the twenty-first century.

There are some Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats that should be addressed to ascertain the ability for change in a technology-driven environment.

### **B. STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF PERSONNEL ASSIGNMENT MANAGEMENT IN A VIRTUAL ENVIRONMENT**

Any effective response to threats and opportunities for change must be based on the intimate knowledge of the Air Force's strengths and weaknesses. Strengths must be built on while minimizing or overcoming weaknesses.

#### **1. Strengths**

The Air Force has a strong AMS that understands the manpower and personnel process. The fine line between authorizations and allocations can result in a disconnect

in properly manning the force or meeting end strength. The AFPC is able to do both by working closely with SAF/MI.

Connectivity using the web is another strength for the AFPC. Legacy systems have been replaced by an user- friendly data-base that can be accessed by everyone in the Air Force. EQUAL allows interactivity, which allows communication to take place throughout the organization. The airmen of today not only expect to be able to communicate, they demand to have enabling resources available at their disposal. The Airman Assignments Branch of the AFPC has a low turnover rate. Since many of the technicians stay at the center for more than one tour, there are experts available who understand the system and can be instrumental in changes in business practices or IT innovations. The professional attitude of the people at the AFPC enables them to seek ways to better serve the customer.

Online personnel functions let people work at their own pace. There are no time limits and users do not have to make decision on the spot. When a member makes up their mind, they will not have to worry about waiting their turn to talk to an assignment representative. This service has an advantage for the assignment NCO, in that they can spend more time counseling those who need it most.

## **2. Weaknesses**

The only thing that keeps a system like EQUAL and EQUAL Plus from being completely interactive is that accountability in a bureaucratic organization is paramount. Documents still have to be signed by the member, approved by the commander, or reconciled by the OPRs. Currently, a service member can access their account online, receive step by step instructions, call up the forms needed to apply for assignments, and

print them out with all the blocks filled in. The caveat: there is a substantial waiting period due to the necessity to obtain required signatures.

Last year, Lt. Gen. Donald L. Peterson, the Air Force's DCS for personnel, put that question to the Air Force Personnel Center at Randolph AFB, Tex. The general asked officials there to study the idea of letting members use home and office computers to complete actions, such as assignments, that traditionally required a trip to their base MPF to finalize. The only problem was the bureaucratic compliance with the "paper trail." (Ref 44).

### **3. Opportunities**

The opportunities for the Air Force in personnel assignment management are outstanding. Re-engineering personnel management processes will allow service members more freedom in choice. It will also improve customer service, which in turn, gives the airman more time to spend with family or at work instead of spending a day taking care of administrative-personnel issues.

The Air Force has the chance to enter into new market technologies and bring their operation up to speed with the civilian firms. This would bring greater exposure to the Air Force and assist in marketing the way they do business, thus increasing recruiting potential.

The weakness presented by the inability to be completely interactive online due to the need for accountability and signatures may be resolved in the near future. Congress recently enacted legislation allowing for "electronic signatures," and the Air Force eventually will be able to accept them. There already is a DoD program to issue 'intelligent' ID cards if one wanted to complete secure transactions or put their signature



on something, they would just put their card into a reader and it would authenticate that they are who they say they are (Ref 45). Instead of the bureaucracy being a threat, it may actually provide a valuable opportunity enabling the Air Force to overcome a weakness in the system.

Opportunity also exists to provide more training to the total force. As a new system develops, personnel have to be developed concurrently. Many airmen are not aware of the vast resources provided by the internet because they have never been exposed to it or trained in how to use the technology for their advantage.

#### **4. Threats**

Since most current Air Force members are part of the generation brought up with computers, officials think few will be put off by the web-based approach. However, there will always be a certain number of people who will not be comfortable with having information they hold dear in cyberspace. The attitudes that, "if it is not broken, why fix it," could actually hinder progress in getting everyone on the same level and fully realizing the benefits of the changes in the process.

Along with the technology-fear factor of some individuals is the prospect that "real" jobs will be taken away by "virtual" entities. There are those who believe that technology equals downsizing. However, this is not always the case.

Within these threats of job loss and discomfort with new technology, exists an opportunity, as well. The AFPC is currently building up the importance of personnel by enhancing the services provided to the customer. By foreseeing the threats, they have added a call center to assist personnel as the assignment program matures. The center realizes people are going to need support to make sure they are doing things the right

way. The call center will be fully staffed so the airman can call an 800 number, e-mail, or chat interactively with a technician.

Another threat is the potential for hackers to gain access to personal information. No system is entirely immune to the determined hacker and there is a potential threat that information could be created or deleted. This could create false accounting in the system.

### **C. FURTHER APPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The other services, particularly the U. S. Navy, should explore a similar re-engineering program to claim the benefits now being experienced by the Air Force.

The most attractive benefit is retention of highly skilled and trained personnel. The statistics from the Air Force program show that job choice matters and the program can work. Historically, the services have claimed a system to allow some input into duty station or assignment choice associated with the annual performance review. This has been a joke among the stakeholders because the data was never seen or used. The unworkable programs that indicate that the military is trying to consider the needs of the individual creates a negative impact on retention and is often taken as another source of mis-information.

Another benefit of a viable and functional system, such as the EQUAL and EQUAL Plus, is the ability to match skills with jobs. Using an interactive database, will not only will make job openings available to the personnel but will also be a source for finding those individuals with certain skills required to do the job. Full utilization of all the skills available to the service will enhance efficiency and effectiveness.

Morale and quality of family life is certainly a benefit that all the services could use. Knowing that a deployment will result in the ability to select the next duty

assignment will have a most positive affect on morale and family planning. The Air Force has aggressively pursued programs, like Home-Basing (HB) and Follow-On tours (FO) that allow airmen to stabilize their family situation

#### **D. AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

This thesis explored the various components of the Air Force manpower and personnel process and how AFPC assigns airmen using modern day technology. The following recommendations are given for further research.

- Conduct a review of the manpower and personnel system for other military services both nationally and internationally.
- Follow up on the progress the Air Force has made in assignment management using focus groups of both airmen and assignment managers.
- Study the effects the Military Modernization in the Air Force has on the ability to maintain a centralized Personnel Data System.
- Review and devise a study of an effective civilian job matching system in comparison to the one in the Air Force.

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## APPENDIX A. GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**Airman and Airmen-** Enlisted members of the United States Air Force on extended active duty (male or female).

**Allocation-** Notification to a MAJCOM or separate activity that a resource (enlisted or officer) is available for reassignment to that command.

**Assigned-** A member counted as part of a unit's assigned strength.

**Assignment-** The permanent change of a person's duty station from one location to another.

**Authorization-** A funded and validated manpower requirement.

**Basic Military Training (BMT)-** Training provided to non-prior airmen to effect an orderly transition from civilian to military life.

**Commander-** Unless otherwise specified, refers to the immediate commander of the member concerned and includes officially appointed squadron commanders.

**Consecutive Overseas Tours (COT)-** A new overseas tour that starts after completing a previous overseas tour without an intervening assignment within the continental United States.

**Continental United States (CONUS)-** United States territory including the adjacent territorial waters, located within North America between Canada and Mexico.

**End Strength**—The count of Air Force military and civilian positions the Air Force needs to have funded in each year of the Future Years Defense Program (FYDP) to accomplish all approved missions. End strength provides the basis for funded man-years within the personnel system, and provides the target for personnel plans, programs, and budgets. End strength is a resource provided to support approved force structure, programs, or missions. End strength changes do not drive force structure or mission changes; they are tied to programmatic increases and decreases in force structure or mission. FYDP end strength is allocated to commands by program element code and category.

**Enlisted Quarterly Assignment Listing (EQUAL)-** Assignment OPRs advertise enlisted requirements to and from overseas corresponding to the assignment cycles. This listing shows projected requirements, by AFSC and grade, by locations. Airmen align their preferences on AF Form 392/PC-III updated and Air Force needs.

**Enlisted Quarterly Assignment Listing-Plus (EQUAL Plus)-** Assignment OPRs advertise assignments that require unique qualifications such as joint/departamental and chief master sergeant requirements.



**Entitlements-** As used in manning considerations, an alternate form of requirement.

**First term airman-** An airman serving on first enlistment (4 years or more) who has not extended 24 months prior active service.

**Manpower-** A critical resource that supports an approved program. It is not a program by itself and not to be manipulated independent of the program it supports.

**Manpower Authorization-** A funded manpower requirement with detail that defines the position in terms of its function, organization, location, skill, grade, and other appropriate characteristics that commands use to extend manpower end strength to units.

**Manpower Requirement-** A statement of the manpower needed to accomplish a specified job, workload, mission, or program. There are two types of manpower requirements: funded and unfunded. Funded manpower requirements are validated and allocated manpower needs. Unfunded requirements are validated manpower needs but are deferred because of budgetary constraints.

**Out of Cycle (OOC) for CONUS TO CONUS Fills.** Requirements to fill selectively manned units are advertised via EQUAL Plus. Assignment NCO's must consider the member's vulnerability for overseas assignments when considering CONUS to CONUS OOC move decisions.

**Personnel Data System (PDS)** - A collective term encompassing the total vertical computerized personnel data system. It does not refer to a specific subsystem. The system provides capability for equitable, responsive, uniformly administered and cost effective management, and administration of active duty military, National Guard, Reserve, and civilian personnel.

**Requirement-** A shortage that exist at a unit or location when the 7<sup>th</sup> month projected manning levels in the AFSC ladder, skill level, and grade under consideration is below the world-wide level, or 100 percent, whichever is lower. When the ladder manning is adequate only because of over manning at the 3 or 5 skill level, consideration is given to the 7 or 9 level.

**Special Experience Identifier (SEI)-** A designate special experience or training not otherwise shown in the AFSC. They provide a means to rapidly sort and identify people with these special skills or training. SEIs apply to both a person's skills and to special skills required by certain manpower positions.

**Temporary Duty-** Duty performed at a location other than a person's permanent duty station for training or education (20 weeks or less) or manning assistance of short duration, 179 days or less.

**Vacancy** - A shortage that exists at a unit or location when 7<sup>th</sup> month projected manning in the AFSC skill level under consideration is less than 100 percent and one or more manpower document authorization exist in that grade.

**Unit Authorization File (UAF)**—A file within the manpower data system (MDS) containing all manpower attributes (data fields) applied to authorizations; for example, functional account code, Air Force specialty code, program element code, personnel accounting symbol, etc.

**Reengineering**—A holistic, methodical approach to reviewing the products and services of an enterprise, the associated processes and tasks, and the resources to accomplish them so as to construct an organization that matches people and available resources to product/service process and track in the best, most efficient way to meet customer requirements

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## APPENDIX B. INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

These questions are constructed as part of the research for my thesis about the Air Force Airman Assignment Division and the electronic agent based system used to produce a job match for Air Force enlisted personnel. My primary purpose for this research is to gage the prospect of using agent- based electronic assignment processes for other government agencies, specifically the United States Navy

Any results from this interview will be confidential and unclassified. The results of this interview are for explanatory analysis only.

### Key Questions:

1. What is your career background? How long have you served in this division?
2. What are your primary responsibilities?
3. Explain how this organization is set up and why it is set up this way?
4. What is the mission of this command? Who are the primary stakeholders?
5. What interdependencies does this division have with the command? With the force as a whole?
6. What were the complaints about the assignment process before the employment of EQUAL?
7. What is the attitude of leaders involved in the AMS process?
8. Do you feel the airmen being assigned are using the system correctly?
9. Who is the champion(s) for changing the system to an electronic process?
10. Are there any current improvements being made to the assignment system? If so, who is leading the changes?
11. How many sailors get the job they want, where they want it, and when they want it?
12. How does the command deal with inventory controls an the demand for "good jobs"?

13. Is there any ongoing training done in the total force to educate airmen on how to use the system for career enhancement?
14. What are some of the security issues for the command using the web?
15. Is there any privacy concerns from airmen regarding the use of the web to find jobs?
16. How is success measured for this division?
17. Is there any reduction in manning for the division as a result of technology?
18. What conflicts arise, if any, among key stakeholders?

## APPENDIX C. QUALITY OF LIFE SURVEY QUESTIONS

RANDOLPH AFB, Texas (AFNS) -- Secretary of the Air Force Sheila E. Widnall and Chief of Staff Gen. Ronald R. Fogleman have asked every blue-suiter and civilian employee to help them do their jobs.

Specifically, Widnall and Fogleman want members to complete and return a Quality of Life Survey addressing topics such as operations tempo, recognition, promotion and evaluation systems, assignments, housing and base-level services.

Personnel officials here remind everyone that the survey is administered through a base point of contact. Most members will complete the survey on a computer at work but discs can be made for members who want to complete the survey at home.

To help members with the survey, personnel officials released the questions so all members have an opportunity to see them and think about their answers prior to receiving their disc and completing the survey.

Following are the surveys, one for military members and one for civilian members:

### **1995 QUALITY OF LIFE SURVEY**

(MILITARY FORM)

#### **DEMOGRAPHICS**

Grade

First two digits AFSC in which working

First two digits of primary AFSC

Major Command

CONUS or Overseas

Currently TDY

Years of Service

Major weapon system

Marital status

Number of dependents  
Gender  
Race

## **ASSIGNMENTS**

The assignment system that affects me provides a fair process for qualified persons to compete for jobs.

The assignment system provides me the opportunity to progress in my career field.

The assignment system provides me the opportunity to achieve my personal goals.

My commander/supervisor discusses career progression and future assignment options with me at least once a year.

The needs of the Air Force should outweigh personal desires in the assignment process.

I understand how the assignment process that affects me works.

I have a say about where and when I will be reassigned.

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